

LIPPINCOTT'S

MONTHLY MAGAZINE

APRIL 1900
SHOULDERS
A COMPLETE NOVEL BY

ALICE BROWN

AUTHOR OF "TIVERTON TALES"

STEPHEN CRANE'S

SIEGE OF PLEVNA, IN "GREAT
BATTLES OF THE WORLD"

A MORMON STORY

BY MRS. J. K. HUDSON

SHORT STORIES, ETC., BY

R. CROCKETT

GEORGE GISSING

ELIZABETH ROBINS PENNELL

LIPPINCOTT'S MAGAZINE

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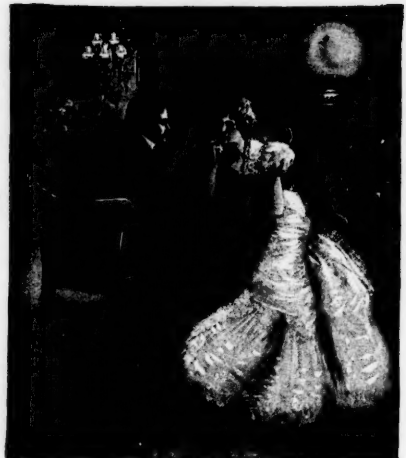
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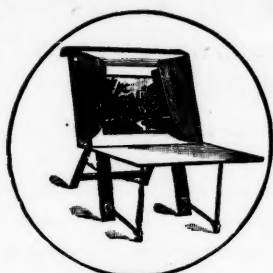
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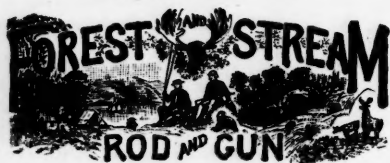
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APRIL SHOWERS

BY

ALICE BROWN

AUTHOR OF "TIVERTON TALES," ETC.



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APRIL SHOWERS

BY ALICE BROWN

Author of "Tiverton Tales," etc.

I.

IT was four o'clock of an afternoon in May; yet the air moved softly, as if it were June, and the sky stretched clearly blue, with great drifting clouds, like a later summer. A straggling village under a hill-side lay asleep. This was King's-End, so called in Revolutionary spirit, a hundred years ago, when it was ashamed of being St. George; and it lay open to air and light, as if nobody had been at home since the founding thereof. The road, marked by scattered houses on either side, curled alluringly for an interval until the land began to rise; then it ran, a fine, yellow track, straight up the mountain. Here, with the ascending slope, it became deeply wooded like the mountain itself, darkened with fir, and softened by patches of new spring green. Thimble Mountain was not very high, counting from the sea-level, but it had an altitude recorded in the imagination of the dwellers below. They spoke of it with great pride, because it was the only considerable height in an undulating country. It wore the moral grandeur of inaccessible peaks, and in reality some of the features inseparable from high and lonely fastnesses: purple shadows when the sun was sinking, frowning stretches quite barren in all seasons, and one or two rocks, grotesque in imitative outline. To-day it seemed to hold a tranquil guardianship of the sleeping village. The world below there was always very still; yet this, by some coincidence of travel, was an hour of deepest quiet. Some of the women had gone up the mountain to an out-door meeting, held by Elder Kent, the travelling preacher, who came this way at

least once a year, and most of the men were scattered fieldward, ploughing or fencing.

Old Mrs. Horner lay in her bed, last autumn set up in the clock-room, and gazed with fiery eyes at a fly buzzing on the pane. He was a herald of the coming tribe, and her gaze, foreseeing the summer battle which would be of no avail, cursed him as he buzzed. But there was no one by to kill him or wave him forth. Her husband was a-field. Big Joan, the help, had gone into the marsh for cowslips, and she herself was still unused to her bedridden state. The tall clock ticked as maddeningly as the fly buzzed. Everything in the room had its chosen way of exasperating her, always except the inmate of the clumsy wooden cradle close beside the bed. This was a fair-cheeked baby, sound asleep.

Sally Horner smoothed the counterpane with trembling fingers, and then retied the strings of her cap. The Bible lay beside her on the bed; she gave it a little, resentful shove, and drew it nearer in frowning apology. She looked up with challenging inquiry into the Constitution mirror, tipped so as to reflect her bed, and the picture she saw there was hardly calculated to induce serenity: a thin face, with sanguine skin dried to a durable snuff-color, a sharp nose, sandy hair put smoothly back under her cap, and hot, red-brown eyes. This was one of her nervous days, and, as she told herself again, there was no one near to note it. Not a sound, save the buzz of that fly, in the village, the township, the whole world!

"I could swear!" remarked Sally Horner aloud.

As if summoned by that daring potentiality, a footstep came swiftly along the path to the front door. It was a man's tread, unhalting, rash. Sally's face lighted with keen inquiry. She pushed back one side of her nightcap and turned her head to listen. Fear was unknown in that still place, but curiosity held every hearthstone. The heavy latch clattered; then the door swung open. A man stepped inside the little entry and faced her, framed by the casing. Sally Horner uttered a shrill scream.

"My soul!" she cried. "You devil!" She raised herself on her elbow, as if she would get out of bed, and thus confronted him. They looked at each other in an enmity silent yet final, a declaration of war.

The man was a typical tramp, in absolute conformity to what King's-End pronounced an awful brotherhood. Not very tall, it could be seen that he was of great strength, and his arms were abnormally long. His face was sallow, surmounted by crisp black hair, covered now by a crow's-nest of a hat. His close, full beard curled tightly, and his eyes held the fire either of fanaticism or an eccentricity not yet classified. The middle part of his face betrayed some lack of natal

nobility; the bridge of the nose sank too deeply beneath the domelike forehead and the cheek-bones were too low. Still, the whole visage held an unusual significance. He carried a little bundle slung over his shoulder, in tramp fashion, and his shirt-collar was opened and thrown loosely away from the hairy breast. That Mrs. Horner noticed with feminine distaste.

He dropped the bundle to the floor. "Well," said he gruffly, "I've come." The old woman was trembling. He noted how her feet shook the counterpane, and his face softened. "Come, don't be scairt," he added. "I never hurt anybody yet."

"Scairt!" snorted Sally Horner passionately. "You needn't trouble yourself. Nobody's afraid o' you here. You never hurt anybody, did ye? Who killed my girl? Who toled her away, an' let her 'most starve to death, an' then crawl home to die? Who was it done that? Who drove me to this bed with grief and sorrer? Some other man, I s'pose!"

Obstinacy settled upon his face like a mask.

"I met Eph Cummin's along the road," he said. "He told me what happened. That's why I've come. To see—the baby."

In spite of himself, his voice fell upon the last word. Some of the tenderness of fatherhood dwelt timidly there, unconscious of itself. Mrs. Horner was pulling the counterpane aside with one trembling hand, and dropping it, to fall in folds upon the cradle.

"You want to see the baby?" she echoed, looking him in the eye to hold his gaze, as the mother partridge flutters to mislead her foe. "Well, you won't see her. What right have you got to lay eyes on her? If you'd married my girl, you'd ha' been the child's father; but now you ain't anybody. You're less'n nobody. Get out o' my house, an' don't you never darken these doors ag'in."

Luke Evans had many enemies within the citadel; one of them was his temper. It rose now, like the hot taste of blood in the throat.

"I ain't got any rights, ain't I?" he repeated savagely. "We'll see 'f I ain't. I'm the young one's father. What have you got to say to that?"

A little responsive sound came from the cradle, an inarticulate gurgling. The man started, and so did his enemy,—she in terror lest her treasure be discovered, he with a strange distaste for that dubious being, his own, yet not his own. But the woman's fear inspired her to insane attack.

"Get out o' this room!" she cried, over and over again. "You poor, miserable creatur! there ain't a respectable house in the neighborhood that would take you in. I'd be ashamed to have you found here."

Anger rose and throttled him anew. He strode around the foot

of the bed and bent over the cradle where the child lay in placid waking, seized it from its nest, and held it, not untenderly, to his bosom.

"If your house is too good for me, it's too good for my folks," he declared doggedly. "You can say good-by to her. She's comin' up the mountain to live with me." He stooped to pick up his bundle, and grasping it, the child, and the stick in some uncouth fashion, walked out of the door and up the road towards his waiting home.

For a moment the magnitude of her misfortune stunned the old woman to silence. She could not believe that anything so terrible had happened; yet her inflamed imagination was all ready with direful possibilities. It meant nothing short of murder to leave that innocent baby in the hands of a man whom she felt to be without conscience or heart. She lay breathless upon her pillow, hardly knowing, for a time, whether she herself had not died. Then, as her blood resumed its flow, there came, with quickened action, a sense of the necessity of rescue, and she began shrieking aloud, calling impartially upon heaven and earth.

"Obed!" she screamed to her husband, yet knowing it was hardly time for him to be home. "Obed! Obed! he's killin' the baby! Help! help! Murder! My God! my God!"

Meantime Luke, his black eyes smouldering with rage, walked furiously along the road, facing this way and that in search of enemies to combat. The hand of every man was against him, but he did not care. There had been nights, known only to God and the stars, when he had lain, face downward, in the same dewy fields, and, clutching the earth which had never been for him, cried a man's hot tears and railed against heaven. But to-day, roused by the palpable injustice of the world, he heard only the call to battle, and armed himself to keep his foothold because it was denied him. But there were no visible foes to fight. A bluebird, thinking very hopefully of nests, made careless paraphrases, though not to him; and stalwart robins called so loudly that his ears, used lately to city streets, ached with a delight which was still half homesickness. He passed the roadside smithy where he had built up a brisk little business before he ran away with Milly Horner. It was closed, like his house, and ferns grew to the very door. He thought, with some dull distaste, that now, burdened by a child, he must blow up the fire and get to work again.

All this time he had not looked at the little warm bundle in his arms. The sense of his own importance, born from his own wrong, filled the visible universe, and the baby was no more than an instrument through which he meant to assert his enmity to the scheme of things. And so he climbed the slope, the more slowly now because he was a third of the way up the mountain, and came, not without a tinge of pleasure, upon his own little dull house in a roadside nook.

Here his mother had lived out her anguished life with the husband who kicked both her and Luke impartially; and here she had died, a month after her tyrant, before she could reconstruct her poor life and learn what it is to tread the earth unterrified. To Luke, the place had become a tragic stage; not one compensating joy had ever illumined it. He had grown up there in endurance of misery for his mother's sake; but daily her woe and his own had wrought upon and corroded him. He caught a sharp breath at sight of the memory-haunted spot, and, drawing a key from his pocket, unlocked the door and went in. He dropped his stick and bundle on the floor, laid the baby on an old calico-covered lounge in the corner, and then went about opening windows. It was a poor place, every article in it threadbare from use; but at the familiar sight and feel of things he settled into a semblance of content. When it could be put off no longer, he turned about, like one summoned to an exacting task, went over to the lounge, and looked at the baby. It was a plump baby, very blond and sleek. Luke gazed at her in growing wonder over such curves and helpless dimples, until he caught himself murmuring,—

"I'm glad the little cuss ain't black like me!"

But his side of the question was not the only one; for, as he stared at the baby, the baby stared at him. He became vaguely aware that it takes two to make a partnership, and that his daughter had got to be reckoned with. When he stole her, she seemed as impersonal as a pillow; but here she was with a soul looking out of crystalline eyes. And all this time she had not cried.

Luke turned away, embarrassed, and began taking some bread and cheese out of his bundle. He made himself busy about the house, where he was a deft workman; but in the back of his consciousness lurked all the time an acute sense of this alien presence. He had stolen his own child; but what was he going to do with her?

An hour later, a few stragglers came down the mountain road from the meeting, but none of them noticed the open windows in the little black house. For one thing, the heavy lilacs screened it in front; and then it had stood so long unoccupied that no one thought of glancing thither. The heads of the women were together, talking over old Elder Kent, telling how Miss Julia, his sister, had failed since the last revival, and how queer it was he should only pray and then dismiss the meeting. Nancy Eliot came last, all by herself, walking with her head high and her gaze exalted. She had taken a renewed resolution that afternoon, and she looked upon herself as one of the Lord's anointed. He had called, and she had answered Him.

She was a young woman, brilliant with the promise of a beauty not yet altogether hers. Somewhat thin, according to the type of lithe New England maids, her figure was straight, well-poised, and

made to move in rhythm. Her cheek's pale olive wore a flush that afternoon, partly from rapid walking and again because Elder Kent had told her something which roused her sympathetic anger. Her eyes were as dark as eyes can be, and her straight hair, braided in an imposing coronal, was black and shining. At first you might have said her features were too severe for an alluring beauty; but let her face you, and you would see that her upper lip was short and the cleft above it slightly irregular. Sometimes it betrayed her into a gleam of white teeth when she had not meant to smile, and always it declared her a woman to be sought and followed.

The scent of the lilacs stole out to her beguilingly, and partly to avoid her neighbors but more for love of the spring, she stepped up to the lowest bush and broke a branch. Just as she put it to her face the shriek of an exasperated baby rent the air. Nancy started. She knew very little about such small deer, but the maternal instinct slept in her, ready to stir. If she had heard a child's cry in the village, she would have walked on unconcerned; but here, from Luke Evans's old house, it cut the stillness like a plea from the infinite, and she could but listen.

For a whole hour the baby had been stupidly good; but now, as time wore on, and no warm milk found its miraculous way into an ever-greedy stomach, it lifted up the wail of the injured, and would not be comforted. Luke had spent that nervous interval in pottering about the house, and, whenever it was possible, turning his back upon his daughter; but now even he became aware that something must be done. So when Nancy, flushed and sweet above her lilacs, stepped in at the open door, he was on his knees by the lounge, groaning "My gracious, don't! O my Lord! don't!" And the baby was bursting with a crimson rage still deepening into purple. Nancy might not understand the rules of the game, but she had an absolute certainty at that time that she was called of the Lord to meet any given emergency; so she marched forward, dropped her lilacs, and took up the baby, blushing as she did so,—for she realized that any poor married woman, not of heaven's elect, would know better than she how a child ought to be handled. Luke rose to his feet. They had been school-mates, but at that instant she seemed to him a delivering angel.

"O Nancy!" he inquired abjectly, "ain't it awful?"

Nancy was already walking up and down with the child on her shoulder. She cast him a glance in turning, sternly reproachful enough to cover any possible case.

"I should think it was awful," she commented. "Whose baby is it?"

"Mine!"

"Yours?" A flush broke redly upon her cheek, and for an instant he thought she was going to relinquish the child.

"You haven't any right to her at all," she announced. "I'm going to take her straight down to her grandmother."

The old look of enmity to mankind flashed out upon his face and wiped away the softness born to welcome her. He placed himself swiftly before the door.

"No, you ain't," he said doggedly. "That's my property, an' you don't leave the room with it."

"But you weren't——" Nancy hesitated, and her cheeks flamed more ruddily.

"We wa'n't married," supplemented Luke. "No, we wa'n't, but I'm that young one's father, an' she belongs to me."

Nancy could not gainsay it; but as she paused by the door, the baby lifted an inexorable voice. So she hastily fell under tyranny and resumed her walk.

"Well, I don't know anything about it," she said. "All is, I can't hear anything cry so."

Then there befell Luke one of the changes which had caused Milly Horner to see his warmer nature and to love him.

"O Nancy!" he said, "I'll tell you, because you never treated me as if I was the dust under your feet. I'd have told Mis' Horner, only she made me mad. Don't you see, Milly didn't want to be married any more than I did? We were just as honest and just as good as husband and wife, but we didn't think marryin' was right."

Nancy looked icily away from him. "I don't want to hear about such things," she said. "You were wicked to teach them to her, and you're wicked to stand up for them."

But Luke, from an aching heart, was conscious only of the strange, new relief of opening his lips and speaking the bitterness pent up behind them.

"No, you can't understand it, an' you never would, unless you'd lived the same life as I have. My mother had two husbands, an' they both abused her, my father an' t'other devil. You've heard him called Old Larrups. An' I swore, when I was a boy, I never 'd marry a woman an' let her feel she wa'n't free. She should leave me whenever she got ready."

Nancy was still pacing the floor, paying an ostentatious attention to the child, but he could see that she was listening.

"I told Milly so," he went on, in the passionate warmth of self-pity, "an' she liked me, an' she said keepin' true to each other was better than if we'd promised it. She knew I didn't believe in ministers an' the Bible an'——"

"If you are going to say you don't believe in God," said Nancy with accusing lips, "I shall go. It's blasphemy, and it's wicked for me to listen."

"An' I made her happy, Nancy, truly I did! but I lost my place, an' then I had to leave her, an' find another, an' she went kind o' crazy with the baby comin' an' all, an' run away home. An' then you see I'd got work, but I couldn't make enough to send for her to come on; an' when I was 'most wore out waitin' to hear from her, I give up my job an' went back, an' there were the letters I'd sent her—an' the money in 'em—an' she gone! An' a note from old Mis' Horner, cussin' me, an' sayin' Milly was dead. So I didn't come here till I got sick o' livin', an' then I did, an' there was the baby." His voice broke, and he put his hands to his eyes.

"Oh, don't!" cried the girl swiftly. "Here! take this." She pressed her handkerchief into his fingers and began singing to the child. But Luke looked at the little square of linen and then put it down on the table. He dashed at his eyes furtively with the back of his hand, and laid his passion by.

"Here, Nancy," he said gently, "you let me take it. I see how you do it. I'll walk a spell."

The baby had subsided into an exasperated silence, and Nancy placed her in his outstretched arms.

"Got a bowl," she asked, "or a pitcher? I'll take this yellow nappy. And don't you say any more wicked things. I won't listen to 'em. I suppose you get 'em out of there!" She turned scornfully to a shelf of books by the mantel, and Luke followed her gaze most humbly. Then she sped out of the door and was back again before long, bearing the nappy with care, for it was full of frothy milk.

Her face was flushed now with the happy excitement of a clever thought well executed. She looked very womanly in her pretty haste.

"You sit down and hold her," she directed him. "Maybe I can feed her out of a spoon."

Luke, quite overcome by the rapid changes in the situation, obeyed with meekness. He took the old rocker, and held the child flat upon his knees, loosely but resolutely pinioning her hands in one of his, with some idea of her potency to outwit him. Nancy knelt before them and administered milk from a spoon. When the child swallowed conformably she could not help looking up at Luke with a smile which he was ready to answer, and when it choked they felt the tragedy. Sometimes the milk ran in little runnels into the creasy neck; but it did come about finally that the deed was accomplished and the baby at rest. Nancy rose, sighing with relief. She set the nappy on the table and wiped the front of her dress.

"Now I must go," she said decisively. "I guess she ought to have some more pretty soon. You can warm what's left."

Luke looked at her in helpless dismay. They had seemed so truly companions in fighting a common misfortune that he had forgotten

what it would be to meet the situation alone. An old hunger stirred in him, older even than his love for Milly, and never really recognized because Nancy Eliot was supposed to belong to another man. Against his will, he spoke with an involuntary jealousy:

"I heard hammerin' at the new house when I come along. I s'pose it's 'most ready for you to move into."

She was angry at once, and for some reason her anger pleased him.

"I'm not going into any new houses," she answered.

A warmth of relief enfolded him, and, moved by it unawares, he smiled. When had he smiled before to-day?

"Ain't you goin' to marry him?" he ventured, watching her.

"I'm not going to marry anybody," said Nancy, not sharply, as she wished to speak, but with the dignity of one set aside for loftier purposes. "Now, are you going to feed her when I'm gone?"

"Do they have to eat often?" he asked weakly.

"Yes; I don't know how often, but they do. And they have to have one cow's milk. This was old Specky's. Our cows are up here in the mountain pasture. You'd better milk her again, before they're driven down. She's the only one with nubs on her horns. I'll tell mother I told you to."

"If I do that I'll pay for it; I've got money. But, Nancy, how often has she got to eat?"

Put to the test, Nancy hedged a little.

"I'll ask mother to come up after supper," she promised haltingly.

"Or if she can't come, I'll find out and come myself."

She turned, in her own fashion of swift decision, and walked out of the house. Only the lilacs were left, and Luke had stepped on them in his perfunctory marching. Absently he lifted them and inhaled their bruised fragrance, while the baby looked at him vacuously.

Meantime Nancy, feeling the vitality of the world and certain that she was very much needed in it, stepped hastily on down the hill; but she had not gone far when Fate knocked again at the door. A young man was lounging against the stone wall, and from the haste with which he came forward at sight of her, evidently waiting for that very purpose. He was extremely handsome in an old-fashioned way, with the distinguished nose and well-cut lips of some young patriot of an elder time, though a humorous quirk at the corners of his mouth released him from the burden of too great a destiny. His heavy light hair was brushed straight back from his forehead. Nancy was conscious of a thrill at sight of him and frowned at herself for having it. It was only, she reflected then, because he looked so much like the pictures in the history, not in the least because she liked him.

"'Afternoon, Nancy," he called, with a bluff lack of ceremony.

"What are you so late for? All the folks went by half an hour ago. I begun to think you must be among the goats."

"I was—detained," said Nancy briefly, hardly looking at him now.

She was going on when he called, "Wait a minute," with a half-veiled authority which she resented and then obeyed. "I want you to come up to the new house. I've got to ask you something. The workmen can't go on till they're told."

"The idea!" exclaimed Nancy. "I don't know anything about houses."

"Oh, yes, you do," he returned, with confidence. "You know this. A man couldn't settle it."

"Then ask your mother."

"Mother's in a tantrum. She won't put up her ear-trumpet, and I haven't spoken a word to her for a week. Come along, Nancy, or I shall have to tell the carpenters why they've got to knock off."

"Very well," said Nancy, trying to act as if she acceded of her own free will. "If I can be of any assistance to you!"

Martin Jeffries smiled, knowing her habit of using long words when she was offended; but he turned with her into a grass-grown driveway at the right, and they went on in silence. At the end of its winding length had been for years the cellar of the old Whittredge estate, and this spring Martin had bought the place and begun to put up a new house. Even at this stage it looked very dignified and comfortable, built with simplicity on a colonial model. They went up the rough steps together, and he offered his hand to help her over the sill. But it was an unnecessary courtesy, and she refused it, gathered her skirts away from the shavings, and stepped into a broad hall, illumined now, in the mellowness of new wood, by the sunset light travelling through from the front door to the back. The clean smell of lumber made it a fragrant spot, and a girl who had gone there with her lover, knowing the house was for them, would have looked her delight. Even upon Nancy a new tranquillity seemed suddenly to fall. She felt more at rest, as, even though unconsciously, she always did when Martin was near.

"It's about the kitchen I wanted to ask you," he said indifferently. "But come in here a minute first. The parlor fireplace is done. Like it?"

It was capacious, deep, and delightful in simplicity. Two iron fire-dogs stood ready, and Nancy noted the carefully laid sticks, birch with curling bark, over a foundation of cones.

"Why, you've fixed a fire!" she said in surprise.

"Yes," returned Martin carelessly. He was striking a match. "Light it while I sweep these shavings away. Let's see if it draws."

He stepped behind her, but without sweeping at all. Instead, he

looked down upon her while she knelt, with a swift, feminine motion, and set the match to the wood. Flames darted up gloriously and curled about the birch, and Nancy, forgetful of the place, knelt still and dreamed about the future. But it was of herself alone she dreamed, and of what she was pleased to think God wished her to do. A long sigh startled her. She rose in haste, to find Martin watching her with passionate eyes. Involuntarily she retreated, and her own glance hardened. It turned her icy when he looked at her like that.

"There, dear," he murmured, "you did it for me. Don't you see why? They wanted to heat up, to dry off, but I couldn't have it done till you'd lighted your own fire first. In your own house, Nancy!" He stretched out his arms to her as if sure she would come to them. That strange authority invariably made her flee. Her "no" meant nothing. He turned it into "yes."

"Then it was only a trick," she said angrily. "You pretend to like me, and you torment me all you can."

He was still gazing at her, that dreamy invitation in his eyes. His hands fell at his sides.

"Oh, no, dearest!" he said. "Only you know you're going to live here with me in this very house. Why, even the house knows! Two winters ago when I cut the lumber, cold days up on the mountain, I used to tell the trees. Then while the boards were seasoning I sat on them and smoked and talked about it. And now you've lit your own fire!"

Nancy trembled. That strange tenderness of his always frightened her. It seemed like none of the men there in the village who went decently to church with their wives and shamefacedly called them "She." His persecution was hateful to her, and she had never, since her earliest girlhood, been without it. But now some sense that the situation was a crucial one roused her to end it.

"Look here, Martin Jeffries," she said, "if that's what you think of me, you might as well stop thinking. I sha'n't ever marry anybody."

Two bright little imps were smiling in his eyes. "Oh, no, I hope not," he said soothingly, "nobody but me. I ain't anybody."

Nancy hardened in her resolve. "I'll tell you something," she went on, "only you mustn't tell. I haven't even broken it to mother yet. When Elder Kent goes away from here, I'm going with him and Miss Julia—to preach."

His eyes opened wide. She had never really surprised him before. "Holy poker!" he remarked. "What for?"

"I am called," answered Nancy with a certain exaltation. "I am called—of God."

Martin stood very silent for a few moments, looking at the floor. His hands were in his pockets and he whistled a stave.

"I've often wished you didn't have so much to do with God," he said musingly. "It ain't healthy."

"I wish you wouldn't say ain't," flashed Nancy, from the sting of an old irritation.

He smiled at her with a transforming radiance. "I won't, if you'll stay at home and be a good girl."

She was finding her way to the door.

"I've had it in mind for over two years," she said, "ever since I cherished a hope. But I couldn't do it till father's old debt was paid off. Now it's all done but twenty dollars, and I've got that laid by. So I'm going."

"Well, I'm glad you mentioned it," returned Martin cheerfully, kicking stray boards out of the way to follow her, "because now I can hurry up the house. Of course, you knew I'd go too."

"You needn't say anything you don't mean," said Nancy with dignity.

"Oh, I mean it all right! You're leading me an awful dance, Nancy; but when we're old folks and sit here side of the fire it'll be something to be talked over. Oh, hold on a minute! I want you to look into the kitchen; I do truly. Should you rather have the flour-barrel in the pantry, or a little cubby built for it in one corner?"

"You can ask your mother, or whoever's going to make your bread."

She went swiftly away down the path, and Martin looked after her until she neared the turn; then he went in again, because she was too precious to be watched out of sight. His face, transfigured by emotion which there was now no reason for concealing, took on a spiritual beauty rare enough to have amazed the girl who flouted him. He was quite willing that she should see his soul; yet how could it walk forth in the face of scorn? He waited musing by the fire until the coals had smoldered, and then went home to smile in a different way at his mother, and coax her into some sort of human companionship.

Nancy walked away, angrily conscious of what she called her lower nature. She was aware of having started from the mountain in a very elevated frame of mind. Luke Evans had jarred it but little, for her sense of beneficence had carried her triumphantly out of his door; but Martin, as he always did, had contrived to set her on that very human and commonplace plane which she was always trying to avoid. By the time she reached the good old farmhouse where she and her mother lived, with Aunt Lindy to keep them company, she was practically cross; the more so because when she entered the kitchen no supper was apparent, though the fire was burning briskly, and three women stood there in the attitude of gossip unfinished. First there was her mother, tall, gaunt, with smoothly banded black hair and long gold earrings, then Aunt Lindy, a marvel of contented flesh, and Joan Macpherson,

old Mrs. Horner's help, the bearer of tidings. Joan's forebears came from Prince Edward's Island, but she prided herself upon being Yankee born, and eradicated, so far as she might, all the tricks of speech to which her ancestry entitled her. She was a giantess with red hair, a woman of great endurance and a canny mind.

"So she screamed herself into fits—an' that hoarse!" she was saying. "An' Mr. Horner an' me happened to get there the same time. 'Be you sick?' says he. 'No,' says she. 'The baby's stole an' murdered.' Then I minded how I dropped my dishcloth this mornin', an' I groaned. She tried to throw the Bible at me for fear I'd get in a word——"

"The Bible!" ejaculated Aunt Lindy meekly, casting her eyes heavenward. "I want to know!"

"An' she would have it Mr. Horner must gether together the neighbors an' go up the mountain an' get the baby back, alive or dead. But he took a drink out o' the dipper an' said he didn't know how the law lay, an' he never heard of a man claimin' that kind of a child before. But if he wanted it, he guessed he had a right to it; an' then she screamed—seems if I could hear her now!—an' says to me, 'You go over to Judge Hills's an' ask him what the law is.'"

"I guess so! The law!" repeated Aunt Lindy admiringly.

"I started," said Joan. She stood in statuesque repose, her great arms folded. "I met a cat on the way an' I never turned back. A cat's bad luck. An' when I got to Judge Hills's, he'd had another stroke an' two doctors over him. So I come home. Then Mis' Horner she made me carry the word to the selec'men, an' they're goin' up along after supper to see if they can get the baby away. An' that's where it lays now."

"Forever!" breathed Aunt Lindy.

"Well, I never heard such doin's myself," said Mrs. Eliot, opening the oven door for a hasty glance. "Nancy, you set the table."

Nancy had taken off her hat, and stood, very cool and superior, by the three agitated women. It seemed to her that she only grasped the situation.

"Mrs. Horner needn't be afraid anything will happen to the baby," she said. "I've just seen it."

"Seen it!" echoed the three together, Aunt Lindy in a soft staccato, easily overborne.

"Yes; I heard it cry when I came along down. So I went in. And I milked old Specky and fed it. I told him he could milk Specky every day, mother," she continued, drawing out the table and beginning to spread the cloth. "I thought it had got to have one cow's milk."

She had accepted the existing turmoil so quietly as to make the

transaction a matter of course. There was the baby in a state of siege, to be attacked by the selectmen after supper, and here was Nancy talking about one cow's milk. Even Big Joan was impressed. She turned silently away.

"Well, I'll tell Mis' Horner," said she, and went homeward. Susan Eliot looked at her daughter hopelessly, as she often did when Nancy took unfamiliar paths with no apparent inkling of their strangeness.

"I guess the baby's got to stay there," continued Nancy as she went on setting the table. "I promised you'd come up after supper and tell him how often she ought to be fed."

"Well, I guess I sha'n't," returned Mrs. Eliot, drawing her biscuit-tin out of the oven for a nearer scrutiny. "You was too hasty, Nancy. I ain't goin' to stir up any kind of a neighborhood brew."

Long before reaching her present stature, Nancy, by virtue of godly living, had become the head of the house, and this unexpected revolt was amazing to her. For a moment she went on working with a little irritated flush upon her cheeks. Then she said rather meekly, "I asked Elder Kent and Miss Julia to stay with us. Was that wrong too?"

"Why, no, of course not! I put in extry biscuits a-purpose. When will they be down along? 'Fore supper?"

"Oh, yes! He only waited to talk with two young men from Pillcott way that came to make a disturbance. He's had an awful time, mother. He told me about it. They had him up last week for disturbing the peace, and so this time he only prayed and sung."

When Mrs. Eliot went into the shed for some light wood Nancy followed her.

"Mother, wait a minute," she began. "Here, don't pick up the limbs yet; I want to speak to you." Mrs. Eliot confronted her, a capable figure, moulded by work and its perplexities. "Mother, I've got something to tell you."

She was so moved in some subtle way that Mrs. Eliot scented the secret and gave her a reassuring nod.

"Is it about Martin Jeffries?" she asked, from that shyness with which the women of the village were accustomed to treat love and its outcome. "I'm real pleased."

Nancy's softer mood settled into the crystal of resolve. "I don't know why it should be about Martin Jeffries," she said coldly. "It's got nothing to do with him. It's only that I've promised Elder Kent to go off with them, preaching. I feel called."

Mrs. Eliot was mechanically holding up her apron with its few gathered chips. She dropped it, and the kindling rattled at her feet. "How long do you mean to be gone?" she asked.

Nancy trembled a little. "Always," she said. "Mother, I am called."

"Well, then that's all there is about it," returned Mrs. Eliot, and again she began picking up her wood. An observer, unused to the ways of New England life, would have said she did not care. Nancy saw that she was moved to the soul. But not for that reason could she give up her mission. She was leaving mother and home for a greater sake, and warmer even than any filial pang was her sense of being set apart and consecrated. Yet she did, at the moment, feel a passionate sorrow for her mother: that egotistical pity of youth which cannot conceive how age is going to exist without the solace of its brightness.

"O mother! don't you carry the wood! you let me!" she cried, sweeping the load from Susan's apron into hers, though usually she ignored that "Irish basket" of immemorial usage. In her eyes it was an untidy makeshift.

"I'm afraid the oven will all cool off," said Mrs. Eliot, and they went in together, sorrowful but composed, the one hungry for pity and yet not putting out her hand, the other aching with sympathy and unschooled in showing it. So the preparations for supper went on, and when the biscuits were overbrowned in waiting, a man and woman came down the mountain road and stopped at the door. King's-End was familiar with the pair, and seeing them pass, only paused long enough at the window to remark, "There goes the Elder and Julia;" but to unaccustomed eyes they were strollers escaped from some eccentric stage. Both were old, and both were vigorous, like all who live chiefly in sun and wind. The man was slender and strong, of no great height, and his white beard fell waving and silky almost to his waist. White hair swept back from his great forehead, and his nose had the line of a delicate length. Dark eyes lay almost hidden in their sockets, shaded by black brows so thick and straight that their profile was not to be believed. His clothes were a decent, shiny black, mended with such exquisite workmanship as to make a separate art of darning. His sister, shorter than he, was yet cast in a sterner mould. Her nose held an aquiline strength, her black eyes an unrelenting fire. Even her hair, white like his own, was coarser and curled with a rough and wilful energy. She too wore black, preserved with the same thrift. The thin silk of her *visite* was darned in many places, and she twisted herself from time to time in walking to cast an anxious glance at a new rent in her skirt, where the blackberry thorns still clung. She carried a neat little parcel and he an old-fashioned carpet-bag. This was their travelling gear for the unbroken wandering of their chosen life.

"Dear me suz!" remarked Susan, when they came in sight. "Set on the biscuits, Nancy. I'd 'most give 'em up."

At the threshold the Elder raised his hands in benediction, and immediately a hush fell upon the women within. Like others who were accustomed to his eccentric ways, the two elder ones thought lightly of

him as "half-crazed," yet they could never free themselves from the awe of his presence.

"Peace be upon this house!" he said, and waited while his sister shook hands with her hostess and Aunt Lindy.

"I hope we haven't put you out," she said with a smiling grace. She was used to making that apology. It tripped from her lips now without consideration. The Elder kept no note of times and seasons, and she was ever trotting on behind him to pay his debts with a melting word. Susan was far too conscientious to protest, but, mentally conceding the delay, she added, "It ain't any put-out at all," and hurried them off to their bedrooms. It was always more or less exciting to entertain the Elder and his sister, for Miss Julia brought pages of harmless gossip from a dozen villages and retailed it brightly. She it was who earned their daily bread by such social garnishing, as well as by the work of her hands, and she shrewdly knew her value. Fidelity to the Elder's calling was not always sufficient to buy him a week's board; but few housewives could resist the appeal of Miss Julia's graces and her practised thrift.

The Elder sat in silence through the meal, withdrawn in meditation, and Julia, tasting her tea delicately, seemed the great lady of the occasion, supping by gracious accord with those to whom she had much to give. Mrs. Eliot asked low-toned questions about the folks at Cumnor, and Aunt Lindy, fond of "sweet trade" as she was, forgot to pass the cake in her desire to hear whether pleats or gathers were worn in Ryde. But Nancy ate her supper with a careful dignity, copying the silence of the man whom she had elected to follow. Every moment with him was, to her mind, instinct with spiritual charm. After supper he withdrew to the garden and paced up and down, still in meditation, while Mrs. Eliot told Miss Julia the story of the stolen baby. Nancy spoke no word, but when the tale was ended she called from the sink, where she was washing dishes:

"I think you might tell me what to say to him about feeding, mother! I'm going up after I've finished these."

"I declare, Nancy," answered her mother, brushing up the hearth, "you do seem to be bewitched. There! I've scorched this turkey wing, an' I knew I should. You can go ask Mis' Horner, if you've got to have your finger in it. I ain't goin' to interfere."

"I said I'd run up and tell him," returned Nancy, with that sedateness which even her adorers found exasperating; "so I must."

"Oh, there they come! there they come!" cried Aunt Lindy huskily from the window. "There's the selec'men an' 'most the whole township with 'em."

Perhaps twenty men and boys were straggling up the road, led in a self-conscious majesty by two selectmen, the third being away trading cattle.

"There's William Kane an' Owen Henry," enumerated Mrs. Eliot from her outlook, "an' one, two, three, four—well, I guess most o' the neighborhood's there. I wonder the women didn't jine in."

"I wisht they had," murmured Aunt Lindy. "I couldn't ha' clim' up there myself, but I'd like to hear Big Joan set it out to-morrer."

"So you see, Nancy, you needn't mix yourself up in it," remarked Susan as the rout went resolutely by, the boys a-grin and the men quite shamefaced over a doubtful quest. "You see they're goin' to bring the baby safe home to its grandmother."

"They won't get it," said Nancy. "But I sha'n't go up till they've gone away."

"Don't you mind; she sha'n't go alone," whispered Miss Julia, nodding at Susan. "I've got nothing to risk, and I'll go up with her myself after this to-do is over. There! the Elder's seen 'em and joined in. I'd full as lieve's he'd gone to bed in peace to-night." Fine lines of an old anxiety wrinkled her forehead, and she craned forward to watch them out of sight. For the Elder, seeing the crowd, had called a peremptory question before leaping the wall to join it.

"He'll pray with them before they come home," said Nancy raptly. "That's what he's going to do."

II.

KING'S-END knew well how forlorn a hope it led in charging under the banner of these two selectmen; for, as Eph Cummings said at starting, "The only man among 'em was the one that wa'n't there." Without him, the office had but the potency of a "wet rag." William Kane, a spare farmer with a lean, stubbly cheek and sweeping chin-beard, was the apostle of expediency. Owen Henry had always been regarded with distaste by the fastidious, because of his color, dark as that of a half-breed, or, as Big Joan supplemented with a travelled scorn, "one of them low Canucks." He was short and very square. His beard, even when closely shaven, seemed to have dyed his cheeks, and the coarse black hair rose like bristles above his forehead. A nice man enough, said the village, but he hadn't got much seem to him. Obed Horner brought up the rear, a little fellow with a round and innocent face and a fringe of whisker. One might have said that he was the least interested of all; yet his mouth worked nervously and his light eyes were still moist with the trace of tears. After greeting their latest recruit, the Elder, they tramped on up the country road, all the more aware, in their silence, of the sounds of spring. Frogs were still peeping down in the pond below the turn, and two or three had begun the long, high recitative of newborn love. The whippoorwill cried melodiously from a neighboring copse, and then whirred nearer and cried again.

"Consarn them birds!" said Eph Cummings, who was so soft-hearted as not willingly to "hurt a fly." "I wish all the whippoorwills in the State of New Hampshire had one neck an' I could wring it."

"Bad sign!" agreed William Kane in his soothing cadence. "Yes, I've al'ays heerd so. Bad sign!"

"I shouldn't care what it's a sign of if I could make 'em shet up," said Eph. Then, becoming aware that a younger generation was listening, he added hastily, "There! there! boys, don't you never touch 'em. I guess they don't do no hurt."

The little black house was in sight now, and the scent of lilacs lay heavily upon the air.

"He ain't got no light," whispered a boy. But the windows were open, though the door had long been locked. The selectmen halted and their guard shuffled to a pause. The Elder, still in the rear, lifted his hands, and his lips formed in the darkness the inaudible benediction, "Peace be upon this house!"

"Goin' in?" asked Owen of his colleague in a stertorous whisper. William Kane scraped his lean cheek and caressed his beard.

"Might as well knock on the door," he remarked. "That can't do no hurt."

"What is it?" cracked a voice from the window, so unexpectedly that the men in advance fell back upon the feet behind them. But courage was not extinct here in King's-End. The dignity of the law asserted itself, and the deputation swayed forward. William Kane nudged his companion, but Owen only breathed loudly in reply. So William essayed the onslaught.

"That you, Luke?" he called cheerfully. "That you? Well, I declare! Got home, ain't ye?"

The dark had come quickly, but they could discern the outline of a head at the window. A boy said afterwards that its eyes were live coals, "jes' like a cat's." But that evidence was never heeded, save by one credulous mother.

"What's the meanin' o' this?" called Luke sharply. "What are you all up here for?"

Obed Horner had lingered in the background. He was a shy man, and the disgrace of his daughter's return seemed to him cruelly augmented by this further scandal. But now desperation provoked him to speech, and he pressed forward.

"I'll tell ye what's the matter, Luke Evans," he asserted passionately. "You've stole a baby out o' my house, an' we've come up here to carry it home ag'in. An' here's the selec'men an' all."

Even the childishness of this last appeal could not entirely efface its dignity. Obed loved the baby, perhaps more tenderly than if it had come into the world well heralded. He was a partisan.

"The baby's mine," returned Luke. "I'm her father. Has anybody got anything to say ag'inst a man's claimin' his own child?"

Obed pressed close to the selectmen. "Can't you answer suthin'?" he whispered desperately.

Silence fell, and then the whippoorwill, flying nearer, began his audacious flouting in their very ears.

"Consarn that bird!" muttered Eph again. "Can't some o' you boys creep round the back o' the shed an' kind o' shoo him away?"

But not even a boy would forego the fearful joy of the coming dialogue. So still was it that each man could hear his neighbor breathing, and two or three the thumping of their hearts.

"Well, now, Luke," said William Kane in a lively manner, "there ain't a mite o' use takin' it hard, all among neighbors so,—but it's understood—it's been understood for quite a while—that you an' Milly wa'n't man an' wife."

"You can understand it all over ag'in," returned Luke, unmoved. "We wa'n't married. An' this baby's ourn."

The Elder came suddenly forward and stepped close up to the window, from which the others were keeping at a prudent length. His face was on a level with the scornful visage within. "But now," he said, "you are ready to marry her, poor girl?"

Obed Horner pressed forward a step, a sob in his throat. "She's dead, Elder," said he, like a child. "My girl's dead. It's too late to make it up to her; she's dead an' gone."

Luke also felt the pathos of the moment; it stirred him to a deeper rage. He was conscious of the dumb protest of one who has taken a stand against the world only because the world has forced him into it. Here he stood, at bay against his judges.

"Yes, she's dead," he agreed bitterly. "An' if she was alive she'd been glad enough to stan' here with me an' face the whole pack on ye. Now look here! if a child's born out o' wedlock, don't ye go round tryin' to find a father for it an' make him support it? Well, you ain't had to hunt much for me. I'm here. An' I say this is my child, an' I'm goin' to take care of it an' bring it up; an' if anybody gits in my way, let him stand from under! That's all."

The Elder put out his hand.

"Good for you, brother," he said warmly. "You speak like a man."

Luke, prepared only for warfare, stared at him, and Obed Horner gave a little dissuading cry:

"Look here, Elder, you'll upset the whole b'ilin'! You let the selec'men speak."

But the selectmen were not ready, whereas Luke had his argument prepared.

"I've loaded my old musket," he continued grimly. "She sets right here in this corner; an' if anybody tries to break into my house an' interfere with my family, I'll open on 'em. That's all I've got to say. What's mine's mine. You let me alone, an' I'll let you alone."

The Elder faced rapidly about. "Friends," said he, "the man may not be right according to law, but he thinks he's right. He means to do his duty by his own. He hopes to make up to the child what he owed the mother."

"It's no such a thing!" called Luke, exasperated by a hateful predicament from which he was too obstinate to withdraw. "I've got nothin' to make up. I done my best by Milly Horner, an' I come back to King's-End as peaceable as a lamb. Eph told me about the baby, an' I meant to look at it, an' then foot it up here an' crawl into a hole an' suck my claws. An' if old Mis' Horner'd ha' treated me decent, I'd ha' done it. But you can't call a man a dog an' he not snap at ye. So I've took my stan' an' I'm goin' to hold to it; an' anybody 't interferes with me'll git a charge o' shot." His face faded away from the dusky square, and they heard him stepping about within. No one moved, but Owen Henry and William Kane whispered together. The face appeared again at the window.

"It's gittin' late for callers," remarked Luke drily. "I guess it's time for you folks to disperse. If you don't, I may have to disperse ye." And King's-End, still headed by its selectmen, turned about and followed the example of the King of France.

But the Elder stayed. He fell on his knees there by the cinnamon rose-bush near the door and prayed silently. Luke stood at the window and looked down upon the white head uplifted towards the night. His lips curled with the scorn of one who watches an innocent mummery. As the Elder rose, Luke stepped softly away from the window, having had enough of talk; but the old man, not regarding him, walked broodingly into the night. He did not, like the others, return to the village; he climbed the mountain slope to a pasture which was wont to be his place of meditation. Stars and great sky spaces were his counsellors. He remembered Him who went into a mountain apart.

Meantime the little train, on its way down hill, talked not at all, though the boys, forgetting even to scuffle or to exchange more than a furtive cuff, cast inquiring glances at their elders. Obed at his gate turned for an instant before going in, and exclaimed in the tone of an injured child:

"An' Owen Henry never spoke one word! Neighbors, I'm obleeged to ye."

Then he sought his wife, and sat by her bedside all night, silent but mindful of her ungoverned grief. Joan Macpherson she would not have. Her red-brown eyes distended in hysterical anguish. She

talked incessantly, and Obed afterwards at his work used sometimes to shudder over the memory of her ravings.

"Well, Lord have mercy on us," he would say, straightening himself to lean on his hoe and look at the ground, trying anew to be convinced that his God was one Who remembereth that we are dust.

Nancy and her mother, with Miss Julia, were at the gate when the troop went by.

"Got the baby?" called Mrs. Eliot.

Eph Cummings shook his head gloomily. "Won't give it up!"

"I told you so," said Nancy. "Mother, I've got to go up there. I said I would. Don't you want to go too?"

Her voice lacked imploring notes, but Susan understood it. That suggestion carried the weight of an appeal. Her heart yielded, but she clung perforce to rural usage. She could not interfere. "I ain't goin' to meddle nor make," she returned unhappily. "It's no concern o' mine, nor yourn either. Let's all come in an' git to bed in good season."

But Nancy stepped out into the road and gathered her skirts about her. She felt the holy elevation of a martyr.

"Don't you worry," whispered Miss Julia in Susan's ear. "I'll go with her. I've got an errand of my own." And she too melted away into the night.

Susan Eliot stood for a moment, watching the dusky shapes lessen up the hill, and then, with a long sigh, went back to the front steps, where she sat and meditated alone. She was well used to the irritation of this inward protest against natures unlike her own. Her husband had taken these by-ways of action wherein she could never follow him, and now Nancy was developing the same exasperating individuality.

The two went silently up the hill. There was no moon, and now the dusk was night indeed, and fell upon them heavily. Nancy, never afraid until this summer, was conscious of its power. She walked softly, yet ashamed of her own caution, and when a branch put out an arresting finger she started aside with a little cry. But Julia, used to lone vigils beside her brother when the spirit was upon him, and to miles of tramping between daylight and dawn, went on like a sinewy soldier. Nothing was more familiar to her now than the uncouth shadows of night, its phantasmal sky; and, like those born to the darkness, she seemed to feel her way through it by a sense more acute than sight.

"It was real good of you to come," said Nancy in a whisper.

But Julia, unawed by the silence, made answer clearly,—*"I wanted to. It gave me an excuse."*

"Oh!" breathed Nancy, stopping short, "what's that?"

High up from the mountain pasture a sound came ebbing down. It was the voice of prayer, chanted with great and musical strength.

"It's brother," said Miss Julia, "praying in the dark."

Nancy laughed a little, nervously. "I might have known," she said, drawing a quick breath; "I've heard him so many times. But somehow it was so sudden—and so awful."

The voice went pealing on. It fell into Biblical utterance, and, like John the Baptist's, cried "Repent!" until the echoing wood returned the word uncannily in a hundred notes.

Nancy, tired with the day and excited by its drama, held herself firmly, lest she sob. She was ashamed to be so dominated. "Here we are," she said at length. "I guess he's shut up and gone to bed."

The little dark house was still. Luke had listened for her as he lay in his bedroom, but his aching body, tired with three days' tramping, was too much for him. While he listened he fell asleep.

The two women stood still in the lilac shadow. Julia put out her hands, gathered great bunches of the blossoms to her face, and laid her aching eyes upon them. She had cried that afternoon some of the terrible tears of old age,—alone, like a hurt animal in the sedge. Only some impersonal touch like this could assuage their burning.

"I guess we shall have to go back again," whispered Nancy at length. "If the baby's asleep, she's all right. We don't want to wake her."

They stepped softly away, pausing at intervals to listen. Half-way down the road Julia spoke, putting a hand on the girl's arm. "Should you just as soon run home alone? I'm going to clip it over the pasture here to the Cumnor Road. I shall be in by the time brother is. You just leave the door for us."

"I'll go with you," said Nancy. Her courage had returned; and proud always of her own strength, she liked to justify it, even to herself. "Here's the gap in the wall."

But Julia still detained her. "You can go," said she. "I'd like you to go. I don't know what I shall find. But you mustn't ever tell. It's my business, and you mustn't ever."

"No, I won't tell," said Nancy. She stepped through the gap, and Julia followed lightly.

They were in a rolling pasture with pines in irregular patches, black now under the weight of night. Nancy remembered how a line of firs on a ridge beyond had often made an iron fretwork against the sunset sky; now they were an impassable wall builded of darkness. The whippoorwill began in the distance, uncannily changing his resting place, as if he fled from some tormenting memory. No ears country-born can hear that sound without a thrill, and for an instant Nancy's inexplicable fear returned upon her. But she put it by and said clearly,—

"I told mother to-night."

"What?"

"About going with you."

"Don't you do it, Nancy, don't you do it!" The woman spoke passionately, yet as if her mind dwelt also on another thing. "Do you want to be a gypsy, and wander up and down the face of the earth?"

"I want to serve God." If the words had been meant for Martin, they might have rung false, from self-consciousness and the fear of his laughter, but the night had washed them clean.

"Then be a good girl, and marry a man that wants you, and take care of him. - Serve God! you don't have to tear yourself all to pieces to do it!"

They were rapidly feeling their way along the trail, sometimes stumbling aside in the darkness, and then finding it anew. Nancy was ahead; but at this false doctrine she stopped an instant and turned upon her companion before going on again. All her life she had known the woman who was following her with these unerring steps, but never as she seemed to-night. It was as if Julia had laid aside a mask and appeared for a moment in the reckless guise of worldly wisdom. She had never been accounted religious in the fanatical fashion of the Elder, but her devotion to him had, in the general eye, worn the aspect of special consecration. She did not exhort, nor did she even join his impromptu services. Sometimes she sat with her hands dropped idly in her lap while he preached and prayed, but that she followed him seemed ample proof of her own delight in holiness. Nancy opened her lips once or twice in astonished combat of a heterodoxy too bewildering even to be denied. So in silence they hurried on and over another remembered "easy place" in the wall, and out into the Cumnor Road. Nancy paused.

"Which way?" she asked.

Julia turned to the left. This was a wider road than that of little King's-End, the great highway leading down to Ryde. Bordered by well-to-do maples, it was airy and light by day, always with a pleasant breeze blowing. The houses were larger here, and the yards fronting upon the road wore almost an air of town munificence. Julia, leading the way, turned in at an open gate set in a fence of chains, held at intervals by the mouths of little iron horses. Nancy remembered how those horses had delighted her childish days, when the Cumnor Road seemed to her the one way into the world.

"It's Judge Hills's!" she said involuntarily as they went up the gravel drive. Miss Julia did not answer her, and Nancy ventured an arresting touch upon her dress. "Miss Julia," she reminded her, "he's sick. Didn't you know it? He's had two strokes."

"I heard of it," said Julia steadily, like one who has faced the

reality of grief until its mention hurts no more. "You stand here by this bush and keep still. I'll be back. If I have to stay, I'll come and tell you."

Nancy fell into the shadow of a great syringa and watched her while she went noiselessly on, avoiding the path now, and choosing the softer turf. One window of the great white house, imposing in its pillared front, was brightly lighted, and an agitated gleam moved about from room to room. Nancy knew there were watchers within. She saw Julia stop, slip her shoes from her feet, and then creep softly along the piazza, turning the corner at the side. There she lost her.

Julia, in her stocking-feet, skirted the south side of the house where the apple-orchard stretched its bowery length and paused before one of the long windows. It was open into a capacious bedroom; and there, with a watcher at either side, his sister and the village nurse, lay Judge Hills, in the helplessness of his stricken state. His head rested high upon pillows, and the distinguished outline of his face, from the great forehead down to the noble chin, seemed to bear already the dignity of death. His sister, of an old-fashioned type, with her delicate outline, curls, and side-combs, had been used to keep the consistency of her years with sober silks and sheer sprigged muslins; now she wore a cambric dress and long white apron. It was her concession to present duty; to one who knew her ways of life, it made the Judge's case a mortal one.

Julia's gaze dwelt upon the sick man with a hunger so intense that when his eyelids trembled and the watchers bent over him she caught her breath and drew backward, as if she had called upon him too insistently. But he did not waken, and after one of the women had moistened his lips they settled themselves to their silent vigil, and she, bending forward again, fed with an unregarded anguish on the scene. Once she noted with a quick glance the old-fashioned appointments of the room: the landscape paper, the highboy, the shining andirons in the fireplace, and the bed itself, with its canopy frame above. It was as if she stole a look at some sacred spot, to store the sight for memory. But her eyes returned to dwell upon his face. Once he lifted his right hand and opened his eyes. He regarded the hand curiously, and then put it over and touched the helpless left one. His lips framed a syllable.

"Air?" repeated the nurse, and she rose and came towards the window. Julia fell back into the shadow, and then, at the sound of the moving sash, slipped along the piazza and down the steps. She put on her shoes and, still cautiously, made her way back to the syringa bush. There she stretched out a trembling hand.

"You here?" she whispered. "Come. He's alive."

They hurried out of the yard, Julia, now that her mission was over,

walking so fast that Nancy could hardly keep step with her, and so fell into a longer stride. Back again at the wall, the old woman stopped and struck her hands together. "My God! my God!" she said quietly, raising her face to heaven, "what makes You let such things be?"

They went swiftly back through the woods, so unerringly avoiding stumps and stones that Nancy again felt as if they were both seeing in the dark. Once they took a short cut through a patch of woodland, where the trees brushed their faces and phosphorescent fires gleamed from the dead stumps below. The girl was strung to a pitch forbidding fear. She expected anything of this amazing night. Out of that black nest of shadow they reached the crisp upland, and then Julia paused, breathing hard.

"You said you wouldn't tell?" she asked.

"I sha'n't tell."

"I'll give you the reason——"

"I don't want any reason."

"Yes; it'll show you how folks live, and how you're making your life to-day and don't know it. When I was young I was going to marry him——"

"Judge Hills?"

"Yes. He was only Stuart Hills then. I left him because my brother went crazy after religion, and I'd got to take care of him. And I've been crazy myself ever since. If I hadn't, I might be in that room to-night, wetting his lips for him when he wakes up." A broken cry escaped her, and she gave way to dry and rending sobs. Nancy put out her hands, but Julia pushed them back and drew up her little figure with an old resolve. "There!" said she, "let's get home. It's all over and done with."

Once out in the road again, she asked in her old tone of gracious courtesy, "You worried about that baby? You want to go up and see if it's asleep?"

"If you'd stay here, I might run up and listen."

Julia sank on a stone, relieved at solitude, and Nancy hurried up the hill. As she approached the little house, some sound too slight to be regarded, and almost like a prescience in the air, made her guess at the nearness of human things. She walked carefully and her breath came quick. She wished herself below, but pride held her steadfast. Then she stepped beyond the lilac-bush and came upon two figures. Involuntarily she put her hand on her heart, but the gigantic bulk of one reassured her. "Joan!" she breathed.

"Glory be to God—Nancy! I thought it was a pixie!" said Joan, crossing herself. "Is the town at your back?"

"I came up to see if the baby was all right," said Nancy with dig-

nity, forced so to account for herself. "I thought maybe he'd forget to feed her again. You can see to it now."

She walked away without a glance at the other woman, but Alla Mixon had not mistaken her; and when, a few minutes later, she and Joan went down the hill, alike disappointed in their quest, her look was keen upon the road before her to see whether Nancy was alone.

"I shouldn't thought Nancy would have gone up there, should you?" she asked Big Joan, who answered drily,—

"Maybe folks wouldn't have thought it of you an' me; but you can't tell by the looks of a toad——"

"Oh, I know all that!" said Alla impatiently, "but you went because it's old Mis' Horner's grandchild, and I went because I happened along."

"The devil's will is some folks' happening," muttered Big Joan.

"What?"

"I said it's all one. Here's your gate. I'll say good-night."

"Did you see anybody with Nancy?" persisted Alla, her hand on the latch.

"I didn't. No more did I see Nancy. I couldn't see my hand before my face. Good-night to ye."

She went on with her lumbering stride, and Alla paused a moment to pat the stray rings of hair about her face, for she saw Martin Jeffries reading by the table. This was his house, and here she was living while she settled the business of her father's estate. Many said if old Mrs. Jeffries would keep her, it would be a long day before she went back to the mills at Severn; and if Martin once took note of her, she would not go back at all. She rubbed her cheeks with a passionate hand, and drew a score of breaths to redden them; then she stepped into the low-ceiled room.

"'Evening, Martin," she called.

He looked up and nodded at her, not uncivilly, though without smiling. Yet Alla made a pretty vision. She was short and compact, with a dainty waist. Her face had a gypsy swarthiness, and her black hair grew in a peak on her forehead. She had an inadvertent sort of dimple in one cheek, and alluring, if not altogether natural, ways of tossing her head. Only her dark eyes were not to a maid's advantage; they were too shallow, and sometimes unpleasant lights were gleaming in them. She stood still a moment, and then came to the table and leaned over Martin's shoulder close without touching him. "What you reading?" she asked.

"History."

Alla was ostensibly scanning the page, yet her eyes were fixed upon the softness of his hair. "It looks real interesting," she said, her voice grown tremulous. "I never've read any history."

"Take this, if you like," said Martin, closing the book and pushing back his chair. "I'm going to bed."

A tiny frown disfigured her forehead and more color came, hard and bright. She stepped back a pace and began taking off her hat. "Your mother gone upstairs?" she asked, with an aim at carelessness.

"Yes, half an hour ago. If you mean to sit up, I'll leave the light."

He had taken his little kitchen lamp and reached the stairs, when some reaction from his coolness stung her to revenge.

"I saw Nancy Eliot to-night," she said hotly, with a woman's rashness bartering present satisfaction for an after pain. He was opening the door. "I went up with Big Joan to find out about that baby Luke Evans stole, and Nancy was just coming away from the house. Heard anything about whether Luke's asked her up there for good?"

An almost imperceptible twinge moved the corners of his mouth, but he answered quietly, "No, I ain't heard," and went upstairs without another look.

She stood listening to his steps, first upon the stairs and then in his little room. When they ceased she burst into a passion of crying, so abandoned that it almost seemed as if she invited it in scorn of her useless beauty; and while the tears were still wet upon her cheeks she took the lamp and went to the mirror with it, holding it high above her head. As she looked, her mouth settled into curves of grieving and her eyes took on the pathos of self-pity. Presently a little hopeful gleam spread, like sunlight, from brow to lips. She could not conceive how one so pretty should ever despair. He was not married yet; if Nancy could be delayed a little on her victorious track, he would have to wait, as he had been waiting all these years. She smiled into her own eyes, and promised them to dare her utmost. Then, putting aside larger questions, she settled her neck-ribbon and reflected that Nancy was very pale of late; besides, she had no gold watch and chain.

III.

NEXT morning Mrs. Eliot ironed, while Aunt Lindy and Julia, with low-toned garnishings of talk, assorted rags for braiding. Nancy changed her dress for one of her school cambrics and made ready for a desired mission. Ever since opening her sleepy eyes she had been moved, not by a sense of her own importance, but the importance of life as it touched her; and so, absorbed in piecing together her bits of bright ambition, she failed to notice how worn her mother looked under the burden of last night's confidence. To Nancy, her own decision made a completed fact, serenely regnant. She had begun inheriting the earth before her feet were even worn in its borders. Now, as she stood in her little bare room before the hazy mirror with the

eagle atop, she crowned her head with braids of shining hair and mused exaltedly over her lot. She had worked very hard, all the years of her girlhood, and success lay before her without a flaw. It seemed to her that she should always succeed, and that whosoever failed had not striven valiantly. Her toilet made, she unlocked the little blue chest containing her few treasures and took from it a roll of money. She counted the bills with a serious absorption, although they had often been counted before, and then pinned them into her pocket. Running lightly down the stairs, she paused a moment at the ironing-table to whisper, "Where s'pose I'm going?"

Susan shook her head. Inwardly she was afraid Nancy meant to climb the mountain again in defiance of village rules.

"Over to Alla Mixon's to make the last payment. I'll bring home the note and let you tear it up."

Her joy was contagious, especially to one a-quiver with maternal love. The tears came into Susan's eyes. "You're a good girl," she said neutrally, and Nancy, laughing, rustled out of the door and along the road.

Susan set down her iron and went to the window for one more look. At the moment, she took comfort in ignoring Nancy's incredible project of a wandering life. It was a nightmare, fled with the coming of dawn; and now the sun had mounted and bluebirds were about. Yet Nancy was not used to flights of unconsidered fancies; whatever she had set her mind upon was always ultimately hers. Forced to remember that, Susan sighed again and took up her cooling iron.

As Nancy walked along her thoughts hung joyously upon a duty done, a stage of life completed. She went back to the day, eight years before, when her mother had explained their poverty under the debt her husband left unpaid. Tom Eliot was more wilful than his daughter even, and he had no staying quality. He built castles, and when they tumbled set about designing more. One of his pet dreams had been a stock-farm; therefore he borrowed six hundred dollars of old Mixon to "launch out." Nothing came of it; indeed, King's-End always said the money went into another kind of stocks and failed to emerge. Eliot died, and his wife, sinking into the apathy of the humble who are acquainted with grief, told Nancy they must sell a piece of land and pay their debt. Their land? The land she had played over, and where she meant sometime to see her own corn waving and her celery in rows for market? For then Nancy meant to be a gardener. She took the matter into thrifty hands, and after her first term of teaching went to old Mixon with a new note in her own name, and made him a payment on it. He was pleased with her pluck; he thought of his one girl, softer of sinew than Nancy, but just as

likely to fight the world alone some day, and told her to "Go ahead!" She might assume the debt if she chose; her father's name should be free.

In the dark stretch of road by the old watering-trough she met Martin Jeffries, heralding his approach by a florid and exultant whistle.

"Nancy, what a fool I am to tune up when I see you coming!" he remarked, showing his white teeth.

"Why?"

"Because then you know I'm 'round, and have time to put on your stand-off look. Shake hands."

Nancy was holding her skirts, guarding them primly from the damp.

"I saw you only yesterday," she said, not offering to accept that winsome invitation.

"Well, and you'll see me to-morrow and Thursday, if I have my way about it. Confound it, Nancy, some day you'll drive me too far! You'll find yourself kissed before you know it."

He stood before her, hands in his pockets, and hat pushed back. She knew, without glancing at him, exactly how he looked, flushed, half angry. She turned from the narrow path he barred to a pool of water in the hollowed road, and thought fastidiously of her boots. But underneath her maiden daintiness some trembling fascination kept her there because she liked to stay.

"Sometimes I wonder I'm so patient with you," he went on roughly, with little tolerance in his tone. "When I wake up in the night and think about you, I wonder if I ain't a sheep to let you treat me so; and then it's daylight, and I meet you all cool and calm and starched up and—good God!" He took off his hat and passed an impatient hand over his forehead.

As for Nancy, she felt herself stiffening. "I wish you wouldn't say ain't!" she remarked perversely.

He broke into a great, mellow guffaw of laughter. That happy god stroked the lines of emotion from his face and creased it into sweetness. He laughed like Pan in some wood hollow, come upon sporting nymphs or grotesque animal.

"O Lord, Nancy!" he cried, when the gusts were stilling. "Ain't it a funny world? Here's you and me—and it's spring—and you wish I wouldn't say ain't!"

"I don't see what there is to laugh about," said Nancy. "I'm going along now."

He did not move. "Where you going, dear?" he asked persuasively. The endearment forbade her answering, but she did want so to tell.

"Down to your house, to see Alla Mixon and make my last pay-

ment on the note." Her eyes lighted, and met his in frank challenge of an answering gleam. She was not disappointed.

"You're a good girl, Nancy," he said softly, and the repeated commendation, in her mother's own words, softened her also.

"I'm glad it's done," she continued. "Now I shall feel as if I could go off with the Elder."

"The deuce you will!" remarked her lover. "You mean, now it's done you feel as if you could come and live in your new house, and send herbs to market. Say, Nancy, 'tis your house, and you can have anybody live in it you like. But I guess you'd better take me!" His face was all overspread with a sunny good-humor, his voice coaxed like that of a child, his hand was seeking hers. Nancy, according to her custom, selected the statement easiest of answer.

"Send herbs to market! Is that all you think of still?"

"That's my profession," said Martin with wilful dignity. "It's going to be yours, too. We're partners."

Her dormant pride in him took up arms and stirred her to indignation.

"Oh, I don't wonder your mother's out of patience with you!" she exclaimed hotly. "Your father the best doctor in the county, and you studying with him and going 'round among the sick, and then settling down to tramp the woods after herbs, and sell them for little or nothing! To just throw yourself away like that—it's awful!"

"But I sha'n't tramp the woods when we are housekeeping," said Martin encouragingly, though he watched her with that quizzical imp lurking at the corner of his mouth. "I'm going to have acres of sage and marjoram behind the house, and beds of lavender. It'll be sweeter than

'The Lord into His garden came.'

Sakes, Nancy! when I think of them beds, I could roll in 'em like a cat."

His malformed pronoun was too much for her, and she considered how deep the puddle might be at the edge. Martin had a wondrous cleverness in diagnosing her patience and guessing when to retire. He stepped aside and took off his hat punctiliously, not forgetting his key-note:

"Good-by, Nancy. Shake hands."

She walked past him and, never once looking back, rounded the turn in the road. Martin took up his cheerful whistle, and went on to the new house where the carpenters were hammering, in hollow cadence and breathless intervals. Eph Cummings met him in the drive.

"Be'n waitin' for ye over an hour'n' a half," he said in some reproach.

"Anything particular?" inquired Martin.

"No; thought sure I'd find ye."

"Come along back then."

"No, our folks want to be harnessed up. Say, Martin, what's to pay in this town 't we can't let folks hoe their own row? There's Luke Evans, now; anybody'd think there wa'n't a trait in his character. Why can't a good, honest girl go up there an' give him a lift 'thout bein' hauled over the coals? Not that I'd want her to, if she's a girl o' mine. But what's the harm? Still, I'd speak to her, folks up in arms so. I certain would speak to her."

He nodded, pleased with his own diplomacy, and passed on; Martin, more slowly, followed the driveway to the house, but he whistled no more that day.

Nancy came to "the Jeffries'," and walked up the path between sunny earth-beds where only heart'sease and lilies-of-the-valley were yet awake, though a hundred sweets lay there in warm expectancy. She went in without knocking. Alla sat by the window, crocheting an intricate edge, and Mrs. Jeffries swept the hearth. This tolerated guest was never allowed to help about the house. Day by day she offered services, and then lingered about in discomfited ease while her hostess toiled silently, like an ant under heavy burdens. Martin's mother was a very little woman indeed, somewhat girlish in her glance and the way she carried her head. Yet, though many might have found her appealing, it was not by her consent. A steel rod of a woman, she fashioned her own opinions and bore them trenchantly aloft. One person she had loved with an exceeding passion,—her husband, the Doctor. Whether she prized Martin very much it would have been difficult to say. She treated him with untired disparagement, from an alleged background of blame because he would not follow his father's calling. The neighbors had a theory that she despised him, but Martin kept his own counsel. When Nancy went in, Mrs. Jeffries only gave her a nod and went on sweeping. She was very deaf, and never attempted to hear without her trumpet, a fickle aid, to be laid aside when it so pleased her. Nancy walked up to Alla and greeted her with a warmth due all to her errand and not to old acquaintanceship.

"Good-morning, Alla. I've come to make my payment. You know I said so, Sunday."

Alla glanced up, and then took a few more careful stitches, counting unnecessarily for a pause. Then she spoke sweetly in her turn.

"Good-morning. The note? Yes, it's right where I can put my hand on it. You sure you want to do it to-day?"

"Oh, yes; of course I do! I'm so pleased I can't wait."

Alla dropped her work in a careful little coil and went upstairs

very slowly. It was a great day for her too. When she came back Nancy had unpinned the money from her pocket and sat holding it, aware of its preciousness.

"How much you going to pay?" asked Alla carelessly, though with a heightened color.

"Twenty dollars."

"Then I'll endorse it. That's the way father used to do with his notes."

"All the payments are there," said Nancy. "He wrote 'em every one down. This is the last, you know."

Alla turned the paper over and gazed elaborately at the back. "There ain't anything written here," she said. She looked up at Nancy and then again at the paper.

"Oh, yes," pursued Nancy, smiling. "Let me see." She bent over it with knitted brows. It was her own handwriting, the note she had made out in her careful script and taken to old Mixon, asking him to receive it in place of the one against her father. She pulled it away from Alla's unsteady fingers and turned it over. The back was blank. A pang of bewilderment pierced her to the heart.

"Why!" she cried wildly. Her knees were weak under her. She looked imploringly at the other girl. "Why, you know I'd 'most paid it up! You knew all along!"

"I didn't know a word," answered Alla steadily. "Father never talked business with me."

"But you knew it!" In the face of all her wasted effort, it seemed to Nancy as if everybody must have known. "I used to go up and make payments."

"I never was there."

It was true. Nancy remembered that. She turned the note over and over in her hands. It was hers; yet it lied to her. She felt the hopeless dismay of one caught in chicanery.

"You let me have it," she whispered. "Let me take it home and sit down and think it over."

But Alla drew it away from her, stepping back a pace. "No, I shouldn't dream of such a thing," she answered with the firmness of one entirely in the right. "Father always kept his business in his own hands. He'd want I should." She seated herself again at the window and took up her work.

Nancy put her hands upon the back of a chair and stood there drooping. Mrs. Jeffries stepped about the hearth, getting ready for ironing, now and then glancing at the two as they moved or spoke. With the abnormal acuteness of those in whom sensibility comes to the aid of some defective sense, she felt the stir in the air, but it was a part of her chosen attitude to despise curiosity among other human

failings. Once, in passing a nail by the door, she knocked down an old cap Martin had been used to wear, and then dusted it with what seemed a lingering tenderness. Alla saw her, and an old jealousy pierced her anew. She looked up at Nancy and spoke coldly:

"Well, you want to make your payment? If it ain't the last, it'll be the first."

Nancy had put the bills in her pocket and stood there, holding her hand upon them. She bent over and pinned the pocket together again. Tears blinded her and her lips were quivering.

"No, I guess I'll wait," she said brokenly, and, without a look at either of the women, went slowly out of the room.

Mrs. Jeffries put down the stove-cover and remarked emphatically to Alla, "She's a good girl."

"You don't seem to think so when you talk to him," returned Alla savagely. "I've heard you tell him to stop running after her and making himself a laughing-stock." She glanced about for the trumpet to convey that statement, subtly tempered; but Mrs. Jeffries shook her head.

"She's a good girl," she said again. "There ain't many like her." Then she returned to the solitude of her infirmity.

Nancy walked weakly along the country road, and all its beauties were dark to her. There is a curious and dreadful irony in the fact that money in its departure assumes the guise of an almost limitless power. So long has it stood for greater things that, when it flees us, we feel for the instant as if the greater things went also. To commit suicide because you are a beggar seems to the vagabond on moorland and blue water a witless thing to do; yet the insanity of loss burns bloom alike with stubble. Nancy knew now the mind of financiers engulfed in ruin. Her brain was benumbed, and she looked blankly at the path before her. Presently, when she could think, she would lament, like others, that her loss was not that of money alone: it represented higher things, the gods to which her days were dedicated. Only that morning her life had dovetailed together so prettily. She was to leave the farm free of debt and go herself to preach the gospel. In lifting that incubus of the unpaid loan she had cherished an ingenuous certainty that the duties incident to birth and blood were done. Henceforth her course lay in holier altitudes. Yet those were fancies of an hour ago. As she walked on, her eyes dry now but still unseeing, a shrill summons came from the Horner window. Old Sally's bed stood that morning where her bitter glance could rake the road.

"Nancy!" she repeated. "You come in here."

Nancy obeyed mechanically, straightening herself and setting her face lest drooping banners betray her. Mrs. Horner's room wore its own exquisite order; the bed was unwrinkled, a mould not made to

be moved in. Her cap and white gown were without crease or spot, and her eyes burned like jewels from under frilled borders. The thump of Big Joan's iron came from the kitchen.

"What is it, Mrs. Horner," asked Nancy, hesitating in the doorway. "Did you want me?"

"You come in," commanded Sally Horner. "Take that chair. No, no, that one: I want to git the light on ye. What'd you go up to Luke Evans's for yisterday arternoon?"

Big Joan appeared from the kitchen; her great bulk filled the doorway.

"I didn't go up," said Nancy vacantly. All yesterday seemed very far away. "I was going by. The baby cried, and I went in."

"Cried!" echoed the old woman sharply. "Where was it? What was he doin' to it? What made it cry?"

"What made the woman eat the apple?" inquired Big Joan aside. "Natur' an' God A'mighty. Babies' cryin'! 'Twa'n't a miracle when she cried down here."

"What was he doin' to it?" persisted the old woman. "You tell me all you see."

"I didn't see anything particular. He hadn't fed it, and I helped him. And he seemed to be much obliged. I'll be going now, Mrs. Horner. I don't know anything more about the baby. I don't really."

The old woman reached out and laid a clutching hand upon her dress. "Look here, you!" she said, in a fiercely beguiling whisper; "you go up there, an' when he's out o' the room ketch up that baby an' run. You bring it here to me, an' I'll keep the doors locked. You do it, an' I'll give ye 'most anything I've got."

"I can't do it, Mrs. Horner," said Nancy, trying to pass. "It isn't my business: mother says so."

Mrs. Horner fell back among her pillows, crying and beating the counterpane with her hands. "It ain't anybody's business," she moaned. "He's gone out plantin', an' Joan here tells me to my face she won't interfere, an' I've sent over'n' over to the selec'men, an' they don't come. Oh, if I was a man, an' had two good legs an' a back!" She lay there glowering, and Big Joan systematically smoothed the sheet.

Nancy made her escape and hurried home, afraid of more challenges from alien affairs. At the door her mother was waiting for her, smiling in justified anticipation. But Nancy could only look wanly in reply and push past her up the stairs. "I got a headache, mother," she said, with the old-time evasion of womankind.

Nancy was hardly out of the Horner yard when another visitor entered it: the Elder, in his voluntary shepherding about the neighborhood. When he stepped in at the door Joan had gone back to her

ironing, and Mrs. Horner, with no onlooker to be moved, had put her passion aside and lay panting, with the marks of tears upon her cheeks. The Elder stopped on the threshold, and her eyes met his in a fiery volley.

"Woman," he said, not with authority but an appealing kindliness, "arise and walk!"

Mrs. Horner gave an inarticulate snort, full of rage and wretchedness. "Don't you call me woman!" she retorted. "I've told ye that afore."

But the Elder was not discomfited. He looked at her patiently.

"They are not my words," he said. "They were uttered by a greater than I."

"Well, then, once is enough," returned Mrs. Horner, with one half-terrified glance at the Bible upon the stand. She meant to make up to it in some moment of unoccupied solitude; meantime she dared her utmost. "Nobody need come in here an' act out Scriptur' times afore me, while my back's achin' an' my legs numb. If you want to do anything besides cackle, you better go up an' see that God-forsaken Luke Evans an' tell him to bring back our baby. Come now, you go! you go!" She was almost cooing at him because her case grew hopeless.

The Elder, although no practical man as concerned his mortal body, awoke to energy over spiritual issues. "I will go there," he said. "I will carry the message." And before she could add more unto it he was gone.

So it happened that Luke, frowning over his work of hammering together a baby's wagon in the shed, while the baby occupied a clothes-basket at his side, looked from the shadow falling before him and saw the Elder in the doorway. Elder Kent was smiling at him, a smile of chosen comradeship. It was an illumining without admixture of mirth, the overflow from a heart in a perpetual attitude of benediction.

"Mrs. Horner wants the child back," he said, with no preamble.

"Well, she won't get her," remarked Luke, trueing a wheel.

The Elder sat down on the chopping-block, and bent forward to put one slender finger on the baby's cheek. It was always amazing to him in his isolated life to see anything so small and sweet.

"Are you a Christian?" he asked incidentally.

"No, I ain't. Nor a Mormon. Nor an idolater. Nor I don't believe there's any God."

"Don't you?" asked the other, with a sympathy quite unstudied. "That's too bad."

Luke looked up at him under brows suspiciously bent. He smelled a rhetorical trap, but the Elder was looking him in the face serenely. The old man's tranquillity spurned him on to crass denial.

"You say you believe in God," he said scornfully, between hammerings. "You don't—or else you ain't used your brains. If there was a God, an' He was good, would He let things happen—the things that do?"

"No," said the Elder simply, "if the things were evil. But there is no evil. No blot on creation, not one!" He looked adoringly out where the spring trees were shimmering and apple blooms burst warmly into pink. The moment seemed to him divine: an amazing answer to months of travail wherein he had interrogated the stars, the growing grass, even the wonders of frost and snow. He had fought his way alone to a desert spring; and here, by sweet according miracle, was one who also thirsted, and for whom the draught was meant.

Luke laughed scornfully.

"What should you say if you never 'd had a chance to learn anything?" he asked with the accusing passion of Ishmael. "If the boys hooted at you—little devils!—when you went to school because you belonged to Old Larrups up on the mountain? What should you say when you see him kick your mother, an' you too little to kill him? God!" The word was a curse.

"Yet," said the Elder with authority, "all those things were not evil; they were good."

"Oh, were they? You can tell that to the marines. You an' me have talked enough."

"I know they were good," said the old man with a lingering passion of his own, "because I have had a long life, and I can see now that evil is one of the ways of God. If the bad man is bad, it is because he is ignorant of the road. He is taking a long, long path, when it might be shortened. But all the roads lead home."

Something, perhaps only the presence of a blameless age, subdued the scoffer. He had slight respect for words; but he was not obtuse to such plain honesty.

"That may be," he remarked grimly, "but if I meet Old Larrups, it won't hender my makin' short work of him, in hell or anywheres else."

"That may be your appointed task," said the Elder with cheerfulness. "He and you may have to take the long road together. I don't understand evil. It is a mystery to me; but God has told me I need not understand."

"Where'd you get your news?" asked Luke, struggling against some natural deference for years and their fruitage.

There were no professional barriers about the Elder. He recognized his kinship with souls, whether or not they walked his way, and answered questions quite simply and directly.

"I am old, you know," he repeated. "I've been all my life think-

ing and praying, chiefly over sin. I've been all my life doubting God because He allowed sin to be—and pain. And suddenly it was borne in on me that He is good, and the world is good, and wrong is only goodness out of tune; I can't tell you, man, I can't tell you! But I know." Tears sprang into his eyes, tears of hopeless longing for an expression ever beyond him. What words had he for the great nature-pæans he heard in the darkness?

Luke glanced at him curiously and stayed his hand from work.

"Well, I guess you believe it all right," he said roughly. "If I did, I should have precious little to worry about."

The Elder's face lighted magically from within.

"Ah, that's it," he said. "You've got it. You are a part of His creation, a part of Him. You are not outside. You can't be afraid any more than that bird would be if a limb broke under him." He had never heard the poet's great quatrain; but the sight of the bird itself had been enough.

Luke turned back to his hammering.

"Want to send any word about the baby?" asked Elder Kent, rising.

"No, I don't."

"If you've begun to set by her——"

"Oh, drop it!" said the outcast scornfully. "I took her to pay off old scores, an' I'm keepin' her to show I'm a hog. That's all there is about it." The Elder broke a horse-radish leaf and set it upright in the basket, cutting off a sunbeam from the baby's chin. "I'll drag the basket over here," said Luke; but the silent service touched him.

Elder Kent went abstractedly away, and Luke pulled the basket out of the sun, and then stood over it, musing. His black brows were bent. He had scant understanding of himself and his feeling for the little creature when he was alone with it. So far the child had been a wonder of goodness, and he had not found much difficulty in keeping its running-gear in order. Big Joan, unknown to her mistress, had come up that morning with a bundle of its clothes, and given him sage counsel. Joan adored the baby, but her sympathies were with him. Something in the crude valor of fighting for one's blood appealed to her; but she was loyal to the household and never spoke her partisanship. Now, faced by the awful prospect of bathing the child and putting fresh clothes on her, Luke had his first moment of real horror over what he had done. He stood appalled before a vista of years—two, three—when that helpless body would need a nurture he abhorred. He wished he had taken his revenge another way. The thought of Nancy returned upon him sweetly and made him warm from head to foot: the gracious vision of her, when, half shrinking from her share in the great maternity of the world, she held the child against her breast and

challenged his designs. He longed for her with an exceeding longing which seemed to him the outgrowth of his needs and so no treason against the dead woman, to whom he held himself bound with an abiding loyalty. It was a part of his obstinacy to prove a faithful husband because his flouters called him no husband at all. The vision of Milly also arose and waited dispassionately to be compared with the living girl: the dead one who had believed implicitly whatever he told her, and yet who failed him when the test of courage came. Nancy seemed to him all soul, yet with an altogether beguiling presence. He whispered her name, and, calling "Come!" looked down the silent road in search of her.

But Nancy was lying straight on her bed, overcome by the morning's encounter. All through the last years she had strained forward on a flying track, and now she had fallen. Her mother came to her with tea, and she could not drink it; for days she lay there silent, swallowing something when faintness forced her. Then, because the walls of the room had grown so hateful, she dressed and crawled downstairs. The Elder had gone prospecting for souls, and Miss Julia sat in the kitchen, pale as Nancy herself, yet clad in the invisible armor of endurance. Susan clucked about with a loving solicitude and made *blanc mange* for dinner.

"Judge Hills is failin'," she said cheerfully at the table, sharing her tidings from the world without.

A flicker of interest passed over the girl's face. She looked up at Julia. But the old woman lifted her cup with a steady hand and drank her tea, strong as it could be poured. Nancy knew she was heartening herself for the night. When dinner was over she followed Julia out of doors, where she had gone to take in the clothes. Alive now to the misery of the world, Nancy felt a passionate pity for her.

"I'll go over there with you to-night, if you want I should," she said in an undertone.

Julia took her clothes-pin from her mouth to answer coldly,—

"Where?"

"The Cumnor Road."

"You needn't. I've been alone: every night."

"But I want to. Oh, please let me!"

Julia looked at her kindly, with a little conventional smile. Nancy understood, in a dim fashion, that she was holding herself in check, and that if she seemed hard it was because the world voices sounded very hollow and far off, while her own woe cried so near.

"I only meant you needn't," she answered. "I'd like to have you. But it wouldn't be wise for you, now you're under the weather."

"I'd like to," urged Nancy again. "It'll do me good to get out into the dark and think about something else." No sooner had she

sorrow of her own, than she tried to think of other woes that might be slaked. A blow had fallen on her. It seemed a judgment; and she looked about within herself for the sin it was meant to castigate. Oh, poor pathos of humanity! to feel a wound and then search for the god who watched its blundering way and bludgeoned it for ills it innocently did. So Nancy, not knowing in what fashion her own web could be unravelled, looked piteously up to heaven and began doing sacrifice. And because her mother told her how Luke walked to the smithy with his gun over his shoulder and the baby in its little cart, and how old Mrs. Horner cried out upon the village to the effect that the child might never have had a bath, she slipped out unperceived that afternoon and climbed the mountain. Here again she might find an altar.

The Evans kitchen was in prime order. Luke himself, surprisingly well-shaven, stood in the doorway, his eyes upon the road. Only the baby had not shared in the general amelioration of circumstances. She was whimpering as if now she knew the recipe by heart.

"Oh," cried Luke fervently, "I knew you'd come!"

Nancy looked upon him in some surprise. The tokens of gallantry had no significance for her, unused to the vagaries of the preening male. Martin Jeffries was not wont to woo her softly, and so long had she been considered his property, that other young men had only desired her from afar. "How's the baby," she asked. "Do you give her a bath?"

"Oh, yes, she's real clean," returned Luke, smiling in what she thought a vacuous fashion. In her eyes it only made him look shiftless, and she concluded the bath could not be thorough.

"Have you given her one to-day?"

"No."

"Then I will. Can you heat up some water?"

He tucked some kindlings in the stove with a glorified alacrity.

"Nancy," he ventured, while they crackled under the cover, "you know the books you spoke of,—the ones you didn't like?" He pointed to the shelf where rested his former pride and glory, the unread volumes of revolt. Nancy's eyes followed. "I've covered 'em up," he continued shyly. "I nailed a piece o' calico across the shelf. You look. You can't see 'em."

"I shouldn't want to see them," said Nancy virtuously. "You'd better have burned them up."

His face fell. The books stood for years of pride in a glorious unbelief. With them at his hand, he could face the social order unabashed.

"I guess I couldn't do that," he said humbly. He looked at her, his seeking heart in his eyes. Already the memory of Milly was one

of the "old, far-off, forgotten things" of another mental phase. Nancy met his glance and felt annoyed. This was the look which, from Martin, held her even while she longed to flee.

"I don't see how you're ever going to take care of this baby," she said with the assurance of a district visitor. "You'll have her sick before you know it: mother says so. You ought not to leave her alone."

"I don't."

"Well, how much good does it do her to be hauled 'round in a cart and lie in the shade while you shoe horses? It's a shame. You ought to have a woman here to see to her." She spoke innocently, without a mawkish thought.

Luke clenched his hands. "Oh, if I could!" he cried passionately. "I see now what I've missed. If I could have her—and marry her—and know everybody knew she belonged to me—O Nancy!" He turned sharply away. She felt there were tears in his eyes, and thought he was lamenting his lost love, neither maid nor wife. So, softened by trouble, her heart warmed to him.

"There! there!" she said gently. "The water's boiling. Should you just as soon go out while I wash her? I don't know how to do it very well."

Luke went into the shed without a word and sat on the chopping-block, kicking his heels and listening to the voice of life. For life was calling him. The maiden was here. "Throw off the clogs of hate and circumstance," whispered the unseen beguiler. "The spring has come. Love and be loved." But all he thought was that the moments were going, and she was in the next room.

It took Nancy a long time to wash the baby. She began it tentatively, almost with distaste; but when a pink foot kicked against her breast, she suddenly imprisoned it in one hand and kissed it softly. She hardly knew what it made her think of, nor why her cheek was red.

"Where do you keep her clothes?" she called at last, and Luke, ecstatically silent, came in and opened the drawer. Then Nancy slipped them on, and the baby murmured at her. She did not heed him now, watching her from the doorway. The sight seemed to him wonderful: the happier child and the beneficent vision, half angel and half mother.

"She ought to be fed, I guess," she suggested, smiling up at him. He had gained an apparent nearness never accorded Martin, because, as yet, he made no demands on her and because he was in trouble.

"I can do that," he answered, also smiling. "I've learnt how, you see."

He warmed the milk, and the baby made anticipatory remarks. Then he fed her from an old coffee-pot with rags tied over the nozzle.

"Do you wash it out every time?" asked Nancy anxiously. "Everything's got to be clean."

When he laid the child back in the cradle, it was more content than he. But now, for him, there was some meaning in the summer world. He looked down at his hands, estimating their strength, and the veins in his forehead swelled with pride: for, he reflected, he could support a woman.

"Do you want to live in the country always?" he asked.

Nancy had risen and was pulling down the sleeves over her strong white arms. "I don't know," she said absently. Her mind was with her own lost argosies. "I shouldn't care."

Then it burst forth. "I ain't much to look at," cried the man, placing himself before her, "but I'd be good to you. I'd take care of you. O Nancy, there's nobody like you!"

The meaning of it struck upon her like Apollo's hand on Daphne's chilling branches. "Is that what you mean?" she cried fiercely. "Oh, how can you!"

He shrank before her not, she felt, because he recognized the justice of the lash, but from pain alone. Then her old partisanship of him as a downtrodden creature subdued her to some tolerance.

"When I came up here just to help you out," she said brokenly, "and Milly——" It was impossible to go on. She meant to say, in the country phrasing, "and Milly not cold in her grave;" but at the thought of the dead girl and herself in one relation to him, her virgin pride took fire. "You mustn't ever speak so to me," she concluded firmly, and turned to go.

"Nancy, you'll come up again?" he besought her. She shook her head.

"Then I don't know what'll become of me." He spoke with a desperate denial not meant to be dramatic. She saw the old dogged look enthroned on his face, and confessed to herself that she did not know either. "After all," he concluded obstinately, "is there any insult in a man's tellin' a girl he thinks more of her than all the world?"

"It is an insult from you," she cried hotly, "when you say you don't believe in any God and——" She could not go on, but he understood her. It cut him to the soul to think this chaste creature could guess he would ask her to bear the gibes of an undiscerning people.

"I'd beg you to marry me," he trembled: "yes, Nancy, on my bended knees." Why had he not begged the other woman? He did not know. The world swam before him: this great planet ruled by a hampering law, and his own little orb of dark revolt. Only he knew she was beautiful to him with the beauty of the spirit, and he clung to her compassion.

Nancy went quietly past him with a significant dignity of motion. She paused on the threshold and looked back. "I sha'n't come again unless I think I ought to, for the baby," she said. "I'll tell Big Joan to come. But, any way, we mustn't speak of this." She looked very stately and tall, stepping down the road, and Luke groaned aloud, remembering that other day when he had not offended her. Then, because ideal passion had not obscured the natural man, he cursed the god of circumstance for making him what he was and so denying him his natural rights.

That afternoon Susan Eliot, worried out of her taciturnity, had stopped Martin Jeffries at her gate.

"Here!" she called to him. "Can you find out what's the matter with Nancy?"

He shook his head.

"You seen her lately?"

"No."

"She looks awfully. She has, ever since that mornin' she went to your house to pay up. I'm plagued to death." Martin took off his hat and ran his hand through his thick hair. "Ain't your mother said anything?" persisted Susan.

"No. Mother wouldn't know. Her head's in the sand."

Susan shaded her eyes and peered up the road. "Ain't that Nancy now?" she asked. "You go an' meet her. You find out. I'll run." She whisked into the house and Martin went on. He was the son of her spirit; he knew that, and the thought, though he smiled over it, gave him some slight comfort when Nancy was cold. He met her in the way, and was shocked at her pallor and the droop of her frame.

"Don't go home, Nancy," said he. "Come for a little walk."

She looked up at him, and he could see that there were dark circles under her eyes, and that all the hope had died out of them: all the self-confidence, too. Her old resistance of him had melted away; but that was the more alarming: it seemed as if she had hardly life enough left to resist. "I can't," she said, still looking at him wanly. "I'm tired."

He turned about with her, and they walked silently in at the gate and up the path. At the door she stopped and said "Good-by."

"No," said Martin, "let me come in a minute."

She led the way, with the same air of finding denial troublesome, and he followed her into the sitting-room, where the afternoon sun lay in a pleasant dream. Nancy sank into the great rocking-chair, and, holding her hat in her lap, pushed her fingers wearily over her forehead. Martin drew a chair in front of her.

"What is it, Nancy?" he asked. "What's the matter?"

She tried to smile away the question, but, in spite of her, two tears

gathered and coursed slowly down her cheeks. Then two more came, and all the hurrying flood. Martin waited, holding his hands hard on his knees.

"I can't do this," she said at last. "They'll be in."

He got up and took her by the hand. "You come with me," he said quietly, "just out to the swing, and get it over."

She rose, beset by the burden of her tears, and he led her out by the side door to the fragrant orchard. There, in a corner by the wall, was the old swing, kept from childhood's days. Martin himself had renewed the rope from time to time, why, he never told; perhaps it was because he had seen grown-up Nancy there, drying her wet hair in sun and wind, and pushing the stones with one careless foot. But this time he took her to the flat rock where the wall gave a back, and there she sat down and wiped her eyes.

"Don't you tell mother," she besought him.

"No."

"You see, I went to make the last payment, and I found I hadn't made any at all." She looked at him in hopeless acceptance of the incredible. Martin could only think she was daft.

"Try to tell me," he said patiently. "You know you paid the rest. What makes you think you didn't?"

"They weren't written down."

"Didn't he write 'em down?"

"Oh, yes, I saw him."

"And they weren't there?"

"No."

"Then the note was forged."

"Oh, no! It was mine. It was my writing—and my paper. You know you laughed at me for using my best paper, with the dove up in the corner. Aunt Lindy gave it to me that Christmas."

Martin was watching her keenly. He kept his eyes on hers, as if to steady her.

"When did I laugh at you?"

"That day in the school-house."

"What day?"

"Why," said Nancy, with a touch of temper, "I'd just begun to teach, and you came in after school to get me to go to ride. It was your birthday, and I gave you my 'Pilgrim's Progress.' I was copying the note, and looked in the arithmetic to see if I had got the wording right; and that was why you laughed. You said, 'Let old Mixon make it out himself;' and I told you I wanted to be sure 'twas right. And I used my new paper—with the dove."

"Ah!" breathed Martin. The day was coming back to him. He remembered other things about it, things Nancy had never known.

For that spring marked the end of their boy and girl companionship. He had ended it himself by telling her he was a man now, and full of love; so he had frightened the bird from his hand. The "Pilgrim's Progress" had been the last thing she ever gave him, perhaps because she was afraid, in her fierce remoteness, of drawing him her way.

"Nancy," he said, "you give the whole thing up to me. I'll sift it."

"You can't. It'll make talk. And mother mustn't know. It would kill her."

"No, it won't make talk either. I'll see to that. Poor little girl! poor Nancy! You go in and lay down, and stop thinking about it."

In the midst of her distress she was dreadingly conscious of wishing he would say "lie" instead of "lay," though it seemed a smaller matter now. But Martin wished to be gone. He was in such haste that she thought a little bitterly of his persistency in time of joy and his cheerful imperviousness to grief.

"Mind what I tell you," he called, striding across the orchard and over the gap. "Stop thinking, and go eat a good supper."

Then he went home as if, Mrs. Eliot thought, he was "sent for," and sat down opposite Alla in the sitting-room, talking to her about nothing at all until she flushed and happiness entered into her heart. His mother, getting supper, watched him suspiciously, but said no word.

IV.

THAT night Nancy sat within the pasture boundary near the Cumnor Road, while Julia Kent went on her lonely quest. They had crossed the woods in silence, though two or three times Nancy thought she heard a footstep behind them and the snapping of a twig. But so far she was unmoved; distraught by greater issues, she could have challenged night to show a spectre blacker than life had conjured for her. Julia had bade her go no farther.

"If he's dying," she said, "I shall want to be alone. I'll come back and tell you. Don't wait more'n half an hour. No, I'll come anyway." So she glided into the night, and Nancy was left to brood over her hope's betrayal and the questions that beset her now incessantly.

Must she begin the weary road over again, or, when Elder Kent should go, take up her cross and follow? The Elder was settled now contentedly, spending his time on the mountain or with Luke. He had periods of thus selecting some soul, and wooing it to seek out God; but he might, at any instant, resume his vagrant march. Should she go? What did God wish? Suddenly fear, unknown to her until this summer, returned upon her; she felt an alien presence in the dark. Yet only Julia appeared out of the shadow, and Nancy, relieved though trembling, put out a hand and then, ashamed, withdrew it. Julia came swiftly up to her.

"He's very low," she said sharply. "I shall stay. I'll cross the pasture with you, first. I don't want to be back yet; the house isn't settled enough. They keep running out, one or another. I'll wait till the watchers come." She was drawing Nancy away homeward, but the girl resisted and whispered in her ear:

"I think there's somebody 'round—in that clump. Don't you?"

Lurkers of the night were nothing to this fierce old woman, dominated by the smothered passion of her youth. She strode over to the grove of pine and underbrush, searched it, and came back unmoved.

"There's nobody there," she said. "You're nervous. You ought to be abed. Come." But they could not know that the man lay wrapped in another shadow, not near enough to hear their speech, though near enough for watching.

Julia walked rapidly, and Nancy, from the poverty of her strength, had some ado to keep up with her. The woman talked sharply, as if she challenged the night, and Nancy, wishing she would lower her voice, was ashamed to ask her. At last, when they were half across the pasture, and the man in the shadow far behind, the old woman sank upon a rock and held her hands to her throat.

"I must rest," she said, "or God Almighty knows how I shall get through this night. Nancy, you mark me—you mark my words: the things that are natural are right. Folks must make way for 'em. Nobody made way for me, and so I went crazy. And I needn't have been. I could have been saved." The dry passion of her voice was terrible to hear. Nancy could not believe that this was the little creature who sat and sewed with farmers' wives, talking briskly of trifles. "See how it ended," she continued. "I thought I was doing what was sent me; and see how it ended!" She seemed to be scourging herself back to the past, as if there only could she feel at home. "He was sixteen—brother John—when it all begun. He'd always been different, and mother liked him best. And when he was sixteen religion got hold of him, and he went into the woods stark naked, all but the old buffalo robe, and told mother he was going to live there till the coming of the Lord. She cried and cried. She used to carry pies down to the swamp where he built him a hut, and he wouldn't touch 'em. I was a little girl then. I thought he was John Baptist, and I told mother 'twas all right, for he'd eat locusts and wild honey. I could laugh now; for I thought the locusts were blooms, and I wondered what he'd do when they were gone. I used to chew 'em myself, and it seemed wonderful they were so sweet; and when they didn't stay me, I thought it was because I wasn't called. So it went on, and Stuart Hills came to me and brought me bunches of Provence roses—O my God! my God! how afraid I am of June till the roses are gone by!—and one day he kissed me and I kissed him back. Then mother was taken sick, and she made me promise, when

she was dying, that wherever brother went I'd go too, and I'd tend him as she would. And she died; and I told Stuart Hills, and said good-by to him, and tramped the roads, while brother called sinners to God, and I cursed the same God in my heart!" She rocked back and forth, a writhing figure of the night.

"Why don't you go to the door and ask them to let you in?" cried Nancy, her heart beating the same terrible measure. "Why don't you tell 'em you've got to be with him?"

The woman laughed a little bitter laugh.

"That's a part of it," she said. "I would if he wanted me; but he don't. Do you suppose he thinks of me as I am, with cracks in my cheeks and claws for hands? No; if he sees me now, as he lays there, it's with my hat on the back of my head and the curls a-streaming. My God! my God!"

Nancy clenched her own hands tight, for fear of imitating that motion of unbridled grief.

"And you heed it!" cried Julia fiercely; "you heed it. That's why I tell you. If a man loves you and wants you, you take him, and don't go raving off about altars and sacrifices. They make me sick. Do you think God set us here to strain ourselves after another world, and forget the one that's under our feet? Folderol!" She rose, and Nancy rose with her. All this time the shadowy man was halting in a deeper shade; now he slipped on behind them.

"Did your brother know?" ventured Nancy.

The old woman laughed, a hopeless note over the pathetic dulness of human kind.

"He? no," she said with a tender scorn of him. "He don't know anything but God and Judgment. Yes, he does sometimes. I've seen him look right into folks and tell 'em what's in their hearts. But not mine. I was too near to him. He never saw mine."

At the boundary wall she turned back, leaving Nancy to go on alone. The girl was deeply stirred. She found it incredible, not that this ancient thing should have suffered the pangs of love, but that anguish, and not a mere dull memory, could still be kept alive. The sequel of the story repelled her, the fiery moral. Was the earth indeed to be regarded, as well as some chilly heaven? Must not the righteous spurn it with their feet? Yet it was not of her old lover she thought when her mind strayed thus to ties and hearth-stones; it was the outcast up on the mountain who had not told her his desire, but his great want of her. Need she seek her sacrifice on the highway? It might lie rather in turning a scoffer to God and mothering his nameless child. So she went thoughtfully on, and when she was within her own gate the shadow of the man fled away unseen.

V.

FOR many days Nancy dragged herself about like one who, in suffering misfortune, has sustained also some physical shock hostile to all the functions of life. It was like a blow on the head: will and motion were paralyzed. So for a time she accepted her trouble slavishly, not knowing how to rise and face it. But one morning her eyes cleared, her heart beat stronger, and she began to question. Some one had juggled with her. Who? Not Alla: a shallow thing, too early bent on courtship and vain wishes, she was yet honest. Not old Mixon: rough as he might have seemed to alien eyes, he was a bit of New England, a lord of the soil, scorning to hold his word more lightly than his bond. While impossibilities balanced thus, her energy grew, and she took her hat and sped along the road to find Alla and say—she did not yet know what. But at least she had risen from her mental swoon. She could think. She could speak.

Alla was at the kitchen table, making spatter-work. It was a stolen moment while Mrs. Jeffries swept the floors above, mercifully removed from the temptation to make satirical remarks about young ones playing with ink. Martin sat by the window, behind the county paper. He looked as if he had settled there for the morning; but Alla could not know that he had seen Nancy coming and hurried in to filch their talk. She was laboriously arranging a pattern of leaves. "I think this'll be real pretty for Christmas," she said; but before he could reply, Nancy was in the room. Her resolve, so strenuous, so ignorant of its own direction, had keyed her to an unwonted pitch. "Look here, Alla," she began, walking straight up to her, "something has got to be done about that note."

Alla arranged a fern with a steady hand. "Well, I'm sure I don't know what to say," she answered sympathetically. "Nor I don't know as there's anything I can do. It's your writing. You told me it was yourself."

"It is my writing," owned Nancy fiercely, "but there's monkey about it. You let me see it again."

Alla carefully wiped her hands and took out her father's long pocket-book. From the papers within she separated the mysterious note and held it forth; but when Nancy would have taken it, again she kept it in a guarding hand. The two girls stood there, holding the bit of paper, the one subjugated again by her old distraction and bewilderment, the other flushed yet calm. Martin put down his paper and looked at them.

"What is it about a note?" he asked.

They started. Nancy hardly saw him, but Alla had not forgotten him for a moment. It was she who answered, looking him in the face with distressful eyes: "Nancy thinks there's something queer about the note. I can't make anything of her."

"It isn't my note," said Nancy loudly. She too had flushed. His interrogating voice made her feel as if they were speaking before a judge. "Mr. Mixon wrote on my note—the other one—and the endorsements are not here."

"Well, here's the note, and that's all I know about it," said Alla despairingly. "Father'd have made a record, wouldn't he?" she asked Martin.

"Sure. Let's see the note." Alla passed it to him without demur. She dared not tell him—either because he was a man, or because he was the man she loved—that it should not go out of her hands. He held it up to the light, with some vague memory that detective stories had much to say about water-marks. "You think it isn't the old note?" he said to Nancy. "Is it like it?"

"I know it isn't the old one," she answered, scornful of his irrelevance. "I know it."

He glanced up at Alla. "Let's see the old one and compare," he asked her carelessly.

She made an almost imperceptible movement, and then steadied herself, looking at him with eyes quickening into flame. Did he doubt her? Was he laying a trap?

"Why, this is all the note there is," she said patiently.

"Oh, yes, of course! what a fool I am!" Again he held it to the light. There was a little brown stain on it, something like the impress of a leaf. "Well, I can't make anything of it." He gave it back and resumed his paper.

Alla sighed quickly, a sigh of satisfaction. He could not care for Nancy, her heart said to her. But Nancy only thought he did not care for her cause; he had told her to leave it with him, and yet, see how he relinquished it! She would not look at the offending note again nor talk of it while he was by.

"I'll bid you good-day," she said proudly, and walked out of the house, though not homeward. Her face was hot with anger, and to escape her mother's eyes she took the descending road and hastened on, her mind a turmoil. If she had a thought, it was that her little school-house lay that way. There, on the step, she might sit down and brood.

Later in the forenoon Mrs. Jeffries fried doughnuts; and while she spurred up the fire Martin stood by the table, gravely making rounds into rings with the aid of a pepper-box top. That act represented an old-time feud. She believed in unembellished cakes; Martin swore to the orthodoxy of rings. He worked for dear life, and when she turned again a new order reigned upon the board.

"My land alive!" she muttered to some unseen confidant, "I've as good a mind as ever I had to eat, to mould 'em up together an' begin all over."

Martin armed himself with the poker and mounted guard. Mrs. Jeffries advanced, looking catcornered lest he catch the betraying twinkle in her eye. Martin was wise in his generation. He had not summered and wintered his mother these twenty-odd years for nothing.

"I like 'em so," he shouted. "I like 'em—like 'em—so! so!" He danced up and down before her; he knew she could not hear, but he knew also that her deafness gave her the most pleasing of ironical satisfactions. It was her weapon, unique, invincible. She pushed him aside, and gathering a handful of the doughy rings laid them in to fry. Martin, with an ostentatious courtesy, put down the poker and picked up her trumpet from the sewing-table between the windows. He applied one end to her ear and remarked into the other, "Mother, you're awful obstinate!"

"Don't yell so," said Mrs. Jeffries, delighted over the onslaught.

"If you weren't so obstinate, you'd be a real nice woman."

"Mercy! I should think I was deaf," she muttered, turning the doughnuts. "Obstinate! you better talk. There's worse than bein' obstinate. What do you do? You hang 'round after a girl that hates the sight of you till you're a laughin' stock——"

"I ain't. Everybody admires me."

"An' then, without why or wherefore, you dance off with a little miserable fly-by-night——"

"She's upstairs," Martin breathed ominously to the trumpet, and presently became aware that the ear-piece was nowhere. She had stepped away and left it pointed—a favorite trick. He pursued her; she shook her head free of it and went on:

"Takin' that poor miserable pint-o'-cider to ride! What do you s'pose folks thinks? What do you s'pose Nancy Eliot thought?"

"I shouldn't think you'd care what she thought," volleyed Martin, aiming to some brief purpose; but she gave no token of hearing.

"That's like a man. My soul, if it ain't! Not like your father. He's the only one that ever stepped that was fit to have gover'ment."

"Didn't he ever like any girl but you?" essayed Martin, following her to the cupboard and back again. "Honest, now! When you sat in the seats and he sung tenor?"

Mrs. Jeffries rolled and cut, interposing a shoulder to aural advances.

"I s'pose it was the greatest mistake I ever made to have her here——"

"She's upstairs," indicated Martin in futile pantomime.

"But I knew there wa'n't nobody else that'd take the trouble, an' I thought she'd settle up the business an' go back to her fact'ry work. But law! not she! A hoss and shay an' you all slicked up, an' bein' beaved over to Ryde, as budge as you please!"

"We went to see about a mortgage," groaned Martin. He was getting the worst of it. He always did in this game of no thoroughfare. But he noted wickedly that his mother, in the abstraction of attack, was at least cutting the doughnuts into rings.

"An' unless I give her a hint, Thanksgiving time will see her under this roof. She'll be here when the snow flies. But I warn ye, if you're goin' to take her to live in that new house——"

He dropped the trumpet and fled, defeated. Alla's step was on the stair; retreat was the only means of preventing unwise revelations. He met her in the front entry and smiled upon her. She looked at him; then her eyes dropped. Alla had changed. While he was indifferent to her, she had courted him by subtile ways, not knowing, in the fierceness of disappointed hope, how far love led her. Now, of a sudden, he had become kind. He did not woo her, yet he sought her out; and some natural instinct withdrew her from him and covered her with a blushing pride. Hope was robust in her; at the first hint of his presence meant for her alone, she told herself that Nancy's cause was lost; her own might yet be won. The illusive veil of a woman's right to be wooed in ancient fashion flung over her such charm that Martin looked upon her amazed. He had never dreamed she was so pretty, so almost sweet.

"Going out?" he asked, seeing her hat and the little basket she carried.

"Yes, down to Cold Spring. There's cress there. Your mother said she liked it." Once she would have bid for his company, but now she dared not.

Martin walked along by her side. "She won't touch it, if you get it," said he. "She likes to go down herself and pull it up."

"Never mind. I guess I'll give it a try," she answered shyly, and he let down the bars for her into the field. She stepped through, not looking behind her, but hunger was keen at her heart. Would he put up the bars and turn away, or would he come? Presently he was at her side; and Nancy, walking home again, saw him,—Nancy, who had watched them driving off to Ryde the previous day. At the sight a strange, new pain beset her. Never before had she seen Martin walking away from her with any girl; though, as she told herself, it hurt her now only because the girl was one of Alla's kind. But even that seemed a part of the muddiness of human affairs; and so she wandered back again into her blind alley of debate.

"Got your business most done?" asked Martin.

"Not quite," returned Alla. "It takes a good while." She saw no end to the vistaed delight of days under the same roof with him. Mrs. Jeffries had spoken the truth. It would be "till snow flies."

"You'd just as soon I'd ask about it?"

"Yes," she vowed with fervency, "I guess I would."

"So Nancy didn't get all paid?"

Alla glanced up at him sharply; but he was occupied with a sweet-apple twig, cut as they went along. It was a crotched stick, and he held it straight before him in outstretched hands.

"Nancy's queer," she said evasively. "I can't make anything out of her."

"Oh, well! she's worked pretty hard to pay up that debt. Sort of takes it out of her to get a setback." The apple bough was obstinate. It would not turn. "Did you know you could find a spring with this, same as you can with witch-hazel?" he asked.

"Folks say so," said Alla, suave with admiration of anything he knew. "Seems terrible queer to me."

"It'll turn in your hands and point straight down to the ground. Sometimes, if you hold it tight, it'll twist the bark to get there. 'Twon't do it to-day. Bewitched, I guess." He tossed it into the grass. "What was that about Nancy Eliot? Oh, well, I wouldn't mention it if I were you. It sets folks to talking, and they take sides, and then where are you?"

Alla was in no danger of telling. Already she had tired of Nancy's troubles; fortune was turning her way, and she thought of nothing else. Once, yearning for love denied, she had told herself that if Nancy had to go to work and climb her hill of difficulty all over again, the new house might stand untenanted, recording barren years. Now the wind had changed, and she wished the girl no harm, save what might work more miracles. They went on to the spring, and she filled her basket with cress, and made a hollow of her hands for him to drink. But he refused, though laughingly. He was afraid of polliwogs, he said; had been ever since that time Eph Cummings thought he swallowed one and was sick a year. Alla drank prettily and tried not to picture the touch of his lips upon her hand. He looked at her bending over the spring. How pretty she was! Why had he never noticed it before! She seemed soft and kindly too. Perhaps she was less of a flirt than he used to think; for Martin, in knowing her lightness, had never guessed that she was for him more than for another.

Cold Spring lay in the lower pasture. "You don't mean to go home right off, do you?" he asked. "Let's climb to Old Maids' Lot."

She turned with him, the ready color suffusing her cheeks. The way led through a defined aisle with a cathedral arch above; it was an old cart-path, used so rarely now that the grass had a chance for all its rich concealment. This was the burgeoning time of the year. Life was at its full. Two little green-gray birds swept back and forth, each with a shred in its beak, and neither daring the homeward way lest these human things should follow.

"Wait," said Martin softly; "they're building. It's on that low branch. See!" He was thinking of the nest—perhaps of his new house, too—but Alla thought only of him. Her heart beat chokingly and hurt her; a mist obscured her eyes.

"Cunning little things!" she said; but she had not seen them.

"They think they're terrible smart. Look! that one's darting in. See him lay the straw with his bill. Little gumps!" But he said it tenderly. The house-maker instinct was strong in him. He told himself, with an oath big enough to astound both girls who thought they knew him, that Thanksgiving time should see him at his own hearth, his mate by his side. Thinking that, he put out a hand to Alla in unconscious appeal, the prayer of man to woman; she saw it too late, though not too late for sickening memory.

They climbed the gentle slope into the open, the clarified green of June filtering over them, a witchery hard to be withstood. The color magic sprang vividly, making a medium thicker than the air, and once Martin put up his hand to brush it away. The June world got into his blood. He thought of his delight, withholding herself from him, and wondered at her dulness; for he never doubted that in her soul Nancy loved him. But all he said was, "Pretty?" And Alla gave a little responsive sound.

They touched the upper slope, and Martin breathed again. Now the spell was not too strong for him. He took off his hat and passed a hand over his forehead. "It's hot," he said. "Good to strike a breeze."

These were the cellars of three ruined houses, side by side. The Cummings sisters had lived here, each in her own domain, civil but unfriending to one another and the world. Alla seated herself on a sunken doorstone, and Martin, at a distance, buried his face in the cool aloofness of the grass.

"See the cinnamon roses!" she called,—something thrilled her voice, though it seemed to be for the forsaken garden,—"and Bouncing Bet. Do you suppose their beds run way out here?"

"Yes," answered Martin dreamily, "and they slipped out and tended 'em and never spoke."

"How'd you know? It was before our day."

"Anybody'd know. They came up here to live because they all three fell in love with the same man, and he made up to each of 'em on the sly. So they hated him—and other folks—but they hated one another more."

"Why?"

"Oh, anybody'd know! You can't blame the one you love, even if she plays you false. You have to blame somebody else."

"The one you love!" It sounded very sweet to her. The old life when she went back and forth to her work in the city, spent her money

on cheap finery, and held a foolish commerce of looks and smiles, seemed to her vague and unlovely. A little more, and it would be quite forgotten. Once she had left her father in loneliness to have what she called life in the town,—but then Martin was not so straight and tall. The woody aisles in King's-End looked to her now like Paradise. Yet old traditions were loud in her, where nature had not muted them, and she sought for talk to hold him. "There's ladies'-delights," she said, "sprinkled all through the grass. Some folks call it heart'sease."

Martin came upright, his brow knitted. What did the soft speech recall? It seemed to set a link into a half-welded chain. He dared not notice the flower, lest it recall something to her also. But he thought he knew. Rising, he shook himself free of warmer fancies, like a dog shedding water. "Come," said he, "let's go home."

Alla rose, too, grieved at the dispelling of her dream. He strode along, thinking, a frown upon his brow. She, trotting after, like a wife used to that unregarded following, studied upon the change in him, and wondered what she could have done. At the door she looked up at him, her brown eyes overflowing.

"You ain't mad?" she asked imploringly. She was very pretty, and Martin bent to reassure her. He was still thinking, yet the natural man in him bade her be comforted.

"Mad! No!" said he absently. But though he lifted his head without kissing her, two people could have sworn he meant to do it. One was Alla, and the other Mrs. Jeffries, looking on scornfully from the next room. So his mother mislaid her trumpet, and could not hear a word the girl said to her all that day and the next.

But Martin, ignorant of these feminine coils, ran upstairs to his own room and his little bookcase, where "Pilgrim's Progress" stood in the old spot. He took it down, glancing first at the top to compare its layer of dust with neighboring edges; for this corner his mother had forborne to touch, ever since he had laid a defiling pipe upon the shelf. But now all the books were clean, and he swore softly. Either his mother had repented or Alla had taken pity on his untidy state. He opened the book and whirled the leaves. Where was the heart'sease left there on the day when Nancy gave him the book in the little bare school-room? It was gone. Yet it had lain there undisturbed for many years. What a fool he had been not to remember! He remembered perfectly now; and he ran whistling down the stairs and caught his mother tumultuously about the waist.

"There! that'll do," she remarked drily. "Enough's as good as a feast. An' next time you want to carry on, you can take somebody else's front entry. This house wa'n't ever made for doin's such as that. I don't know what your father'd say."

Her little body trembled; her eyes held needles for him. Martin

looked at her in wonder. It dawned upon his unenlightened mind that now she was not "play mad" as of old, but in an honest fury. What for? He threw back his head and laughed.

"Jealous! My King!" cried he. "Jealous for Nancy! Hurrah for Jackson!" He imprinted a large and cordial kiss on her fiery cheek, and then another. "Mother, you're an old darling!" he announced in a bellow. "A dar-ling! Hear? Was it because I went to walk? God sakes——" Then it occurred to him that he could not explain without enlightening the room overhead. And, still laughing, he let her go. He went off to find Nancy, and his mother, striving to accomplish that moral effect before he left the room, rushed to the roller-towel and rubbed her cheek.

But Nancy could not see him. She was lying down, her mother said, with a bad headache. It came on sudden.

Through this June weather Luke was working in his smithy, and patronage grew fast. Even the neighboring towns, hearing how he carried the stolen baby to a friendly shade and watched her between blows, remembered that he was an excellent smith, capable of turning his hand to anything. At intervals he warmed milk for her over the coals, and glad were they who saw the administering thereof. One day Obed Horner came up with his old white horse, and while Luke pared hoofs, with one eye on the child, the grandfather stepped deprecatingly to her little nest and looked down upon her. She soliloquized remotely, and tears came into his old eyes. He had never relinquished the idea that the baby knew him; now he thought bitterly she was "all Lar-rups. He stretched down his arms towards her, but Luke dropped his iron and set his gun within a nearer reach. Then he blew up the fire again.

"Lord sakes, Luke Evans," trembled the old man, "you wouldn't shoot an' run the resk o' hittin' that innocent child?"

"Shoot?" retorted Luke grimly. "Who said anything about shootin'?"

"I tell ye," said Obed in sudden heat, "you could be took up for having firearms 'round promisc'us so. You ain't no more right to go armed——"

"My old fowlin'-piece is there for foxes," announced Luke, hammering. "If one comes along——" He said no more. But Obed went home and told his wife that all her plans of rescue were naught concerning a man who would as soon shoot the child as eat—sooner.

On this day Luke had no patrons; so he left his work at three, shouldered his gun, and went homeward, the child on his arm. He did not always use the little wagon now; he had learned the habit of holding her, and her soft weight was pleasant to him. Luke knew, and owned to himself with a grim smile, the moment of his beginning to

love her; it was when she took to abusing him, digging her hands into his curly hair, kicking him with rampant legs, and then laughing wantonly in his face. He hugged her close going up the hill, and put his cheek down softly, so that the whiskers should not hurt; a great trembling went over him when he thought her hair might yet be dark. She did not look like poor Milly. Perhaps her coloring would be his—and Nancy's.

That afternoon a new resolution grew within him, and in the early twilight he shaved and made his hair as sleek as deference demanded. Then, with the baby in its little cart, he went down the hill to call on Nancy. Why should he ignore the ways of other men? Why not choose his girl, and go honestly to seek her? Aunt Lindy answered his knock, but, finding him, she fled away and banged the door in his face.

"My soul, Susan, on'y you see what's out there in the path!" she panted, appearing in the kitchen, where her sister was wiping the last dish.

"What's the matter now?" asked Susan hardily. "Mercy! I should think the British had landed!" But she went to the door, and reached it with Nancy, who, pale and leaden-footed, came downstairs for a little walk in the dusk.

"Well, if ever I see!" cried Susan, her eyes on the baby. "If this don't beat all! On your way down along to gran'ma's?"

Luke frowned. His amiable besetment dried like a husk. Yet his eyes sought Nancy, unabashed. "I thought I'd come in a minute," he said to her imploringly.

"Sit down here on the porch, won't you?"

She seated herself as she spoke, leaving room for him at the other side. Susan turned about and went in, and Nancy could hear her remark to Aunt Lindy that some folks had brass enough to line a kettle. Later a gentle and rhythmical creak sounded near the entry door, and she knew Aunt Lindy had drawn her chair to a point of vantage.

"I thought I'd come down an' set a spell," said Luke thickly.

"How's baby?" asked Nancy, regarding only the little contented thing, who seemed so gracious among untoward ways.

"Fust-rate. When should you give her suthin' solid?—bread or suthin'?"

Nancy frowned. "I don't know anything about it," she said, with decision; "you can ask Big Joan." She made a little involuntary movement, for Martin had turned in at the gate, and she had vowed not to see him. But now he was near, and pride counselled her to stay. He came buoyantly up to them, hat in hand, the last flush of daylight lying upon his hair. His brows went up a trifle, but he spoke jocosely. It seemed to him that he had good news.

"'Evening, Nancy. H'are ye, Luke? Is that the young one? Hullo!"

The baby was not the only one who failed to answer. Luke gave a little grunt and then looked at Nancy. For the first time since the baby's actual regnancy he wished it away. It gave Martin an advantage. He felt queerly encumbered.

"Did you want to see mother?" asked Nancy stiffly.

"Oh, no," returned Martin with cheerfulness, "I came to see you."

"She's in the house."

"All right. It's nice out here."

But Susan did not remain in the house. She appeared suddenly in the entry, and, as Nancy knew, from a softer swish of skirts, Aunt Lindy was not far behind. Susan had borne much, but it was gall beyond her drinking to see Nancy sitting out there in the face of the world in such droll company.

"Luke Evans," quoth she, "I should think you was bewitched to keep that baby out in the night air. If you've got anything to say, say it an' done with it; but don't for heaven's sake let her lay there breathin' in all this damp."

Luke rose like a shot. "I guess I'll be goin'," he said to Nancy.

There was defiance in his air, though not for her. He had been driven away, turned from another door only because he had tried to be like other folks. Her heart rose in championship. She spoke sweetly, so sweetly that Martin looked at her in wonder:

"I guess it is damp for her; but I'll come up to-morrow, and we'll talk it all over then."

Her mother gasped; so did Luke, at his good fortune. What was it they would talk over?—their coming days? Not so small a thing as the baby's diet. He gave her a rapturous look and went away, drawing his little cart.

"Well, if ever!" remarked Susan, and also disappeared. Her mind was momentarily at rest. Come good or ill to Nancy, she felt that Martin alone could deal with her. Nancy, conscious of having stumbled into a deeper slough, was no more serene for knowing it.

"It's getting cool," she said with a heightened color. "I guess I'll go in."

"Not yet," returned Martin sharply. "Nancy, you don't want to get yourself talked about."

Nancy lifted her head, ganderlike, as Martin had once told her. She thought of it now. "Talked about!" she repeated. "How?"

Martin astonished himself. When had he lost his temper before? But when had he seen such cause? "In the worst way," he said hotly. "I know you go up there and look after that baby. That's not so bad, only foolish. But it's got 'round he's going with you."

She trembled with anger. "Why not?" she asked satirically. "Why not? Is it a crime for a man to go with a girl? Seems to me I've seen you with one quite a lot lately." She could have bitten her recreant tongue for the admission. It gave him a key to her anger. She was right. He would use it. Martin threw back his head and laughed. "So I did," said he. "What's sauce for the goose—See here, Nancy, I want you to tell me something." These love matters could wait for brighter times. He moved nearer and spoke in an undertone, defying Aunt Lindy. "You remember that day you gave me 'Pilgrim's Progress'?"

"Well, what of it?"

"Didn't you give me a flower, and didn't I put it somewheres and promise it should stay?"

Poor Nancy! She was learning that the masculine heart may be pierced to the centre with the significance of mementoes, and yet take no account of them until the day of reckoning.

"That's neither here nor there," she said in one of her mother's phrasings. Nancy always reproached herself for not remaining so elegant as she could wish under strong emotion. In sorrow or excitement she went back to homely speech, like a child fleeing to an apron.

"What was the flower?" persisted Martin. "What did I do with it?"

He wanted her testimony with no suggestive hint. Nancy spoke from a sense of outrage. He was going with another girl. She did not care for that; but he should never come here and resurrect the beginnings of dead tenderness.

"If you said you'd put it somewhere, I suppose you did. If you said it should stay there, I suppose it has. Why don't you look?"

Martin's hand was on the arm of her chair. He shook it a little, and she sat the straighter. "You needn't build up pick' fences round you," he said roughly. "It ain't necessary to-night. I ain't making love. I'm talking business. What was that flower?"

"Depends on the season," said Nancy, with a fictitious lightness. "Let's see, what time of the year was it?"

"Why, you know," said Martin, deceived and injured, "my birthday!"

"And when was that?"

He got up and strode down the path, his hands in his pockets. Then he turned about and came back. He looked at her, and their eyes were on a level. "Nancy," said he deliberately, "you're enough to try the patience of a saint. I wonder—yes, I do wonder that I can be so possessed about you."

So he was still possessed! A little flicker stirred in her heart, but she put it out, with the conclusion that if he did not care for the other girl it was all the worse. He had demeaned himself by flirting.

"Be good," he said coaxingly, "and tell me. Was it a wildflower?"

"I've got to go in," she told him, rising. "It's getting damp; mother said so." She had never seemed so inaccessible, her intelligence now as well as her heart.

"Nancy," cried Martin, "you'll drive me to drink! Oh, stop, stop! I don't mean that. It's only a form of speech. Sometimes it don't seem as if you knew once. But see here. I want to know if I put the flower into the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' for I think she's been into my room——"

"She?"

"Alla."

"Oh," breathed Nancy, loftily indifferent.

But Martin knew too little of the ways of womenfolk to stop. "She's looked over my books," he said, absorbed in theory. "She borrowed some. Mother told me so, to make trouble. And suppose I did press the flower in the book, suppose I did pick up the first piece of paper handy, to press it in——"

Nancy could not see the road he stumbled on. She only knew that he and she and Alla were mixed in some sentimental complication, and she would none of it. "That will do, Martin Jeffries," she said firmly, with what he called her air of District Number Four. "I'm going in. If you and Alla Mixon have got into some kind of a squabble, it's nothing to me. You can settle it between you."

She walked into the house, and Martin, left alone in the sweet summer night, did for a moment wonder what he should do with this impossible creature when he got her caged. But that he knew he could risk.

VI.

THE season was getting on. Bobolinks sang for dear life, and the musical scythe cut the air and then the grass, through acres of redbtop and clover. The women, mixing sweetened water to carry afield, talked of many things; and the men, in their nooning, talked too. Martin was going with Alla Mixon, so they said; he had taken her to ride twice in a fortnight. Chance for some other feller up to Eliot's now. Nancy'd get a crooked stick, though, if she took up with Luke Larrups. But it looked so. The Elder must be showing his years, for he had no meetings off on the mountain. He only went up there to pray alone. He dropped in to the houses 'round and beseeched folks to have a good time. Not a word about hell-fire! And last Sunday, when Eph was getting in his hay before the shower, and the Elder hollered, "Six days shalt thou labor," and Eph hollered back, "That's right. We ain't had but five this week; Wednesday was rainy!" the Elder only kind o' twinkled and went by. Well! well! he'd hil' his own for a good many years now.

But the Elder was far from sinking into the acquiescence of age. He was taking his forty days of prayer and reflection before going out into a larger world to carry tidings he did not as yet know how to cry aloud. The inspirations of other men, save as he found them in the Bible, were sealed to him. These new thoughts coursing through his brain—had they ever bloomed on earth before? He thought not. He saw the vision, not of a world gone wrong, but of a world eternally right from the beginning. His Christ had once been the medicine for a distorted birth. Now He was the white image of divinity come to show the way. Yet how should he tell the message, and no one suffer harm?

He was sitting on the porch reflecting, his clasped hands on a knotted stick and his chin upon his hands. Miss Julia sat silent within the room behind, shelling peas. Nancy came droopingly up the walk. She had been for one of her visits to Alla Mixon, and with the same dreary result. Yet Alla was kinder than before, as one who has good fortune on her side; and when Nancy besought her to say whether there might not be another note, she only denied having seen any other, but added encouragingly,—

“Maybe we’ll come across it some day.”

Nancy came up to the old man with a dull step and sat down at his feet. She fanned herself with her hat and thought, from some faint wonder, how summer days had changed. Her eyes mirrored a shining world, all beauty; but her heart sat coldly in the midst. Looking at the Elder in the same unloving scrutiny, she wondered why he should have lost his spiritual power. He was no prophet now, only a gentle, dear old man; she longed for the prophet back again.

“Elder Kent!” she called him. He did not answer. “Elder Kent!” Then he awoke from his dream of glorified worlds. “You know I said I’d go with you?”

He nodded, looking at her kindly.

“Should you think—if mother needed me—it would make any difference?” She was stumbling among platitudes, because the truth could not be told. What would it mean to him?

“You shall leave father and mother,” he paraphrased raptly. But he was not thinking of her.

“I said I’d go,” repeated Nancy, with heart-break in her voice; and he smiled upon her.

“Yes; you made a vow, a vow unto the Lord. You shall keep it, child. I will help you.”

He thought that was what she wanted, to be held in the way; and, meeting the sudden radiance of his smile, she thought it also, for the moment. Again she felt the constraining of his spiritual power, but without an answering exaltation. Now she saw only the dreariness of well-doing.

"When are you going?" she asked him hopelessly.

"In about a week. We might start on a Friday and be in Pillcott again in time for Sunday meeting. Then the factory folks are out. Be of good cheer," he heartened her. "You are not bargaining with God: yet it shall be blessed to you. Look at my sister. She has followed the cross through sun and snow, and her age is full of peace." Nancy, in spite of herself, glanced back at the old woman busy at her work. Julia had heard him, and she was laughing noiselessly, a laugh that hurts the beholder: for it had no mirth. "I will help you," he repeated. "You shall not turn back."

Then Nancy knew she was to go, and the fiat was just. She had vowed herself unto the Lord. If the sacrifice waxed heavy, so much the sweeter to make it for Him who gave up all for her. Yet in her olden dreams of crosses she had never seen her mother suffering a sharper pang than that of loneliness. Now she must tell her about the unfulfilled desire of both their hearts, and leave her to a barren life devoid of hope.

"Brother!" called Miss Julia from the sitting-room. Her voice rang sharply and the Elder turned. "Brother, come in here," she commanded, and he went in haste. Her manner towards him was uniformly marked by the deference which befits a handmaid to the Lord's anointed; now he felt the change.

"Why, Julia," he asked, bending over her chair, "you sick?"

"No," she said steadily, "I'm well and in my right mind. I wish as much could be said of all. Brother, I don't want you should set a day to go."

"Why not?" asked the Elder wonderingly. He could not remember a time when she had questioned him. Her subserviency had not spoiled him; his nature was too sweet. But he was accustomed to think of her as the ministering and subordinate spirit, as a woman should be.

"I can't leave King's-End yet." Julia did not look at him. Her voice sounded hard, her fingers moved like magic. "I don't know when I can leave."

"We've been here some time."

"I pay as we go. I've worked like a silk-worm. They beg and pray me not to work so hard. We're going to begin quilting to-day. I can settle for our board. Brother, I've got to stay." If he would yield without further beseeching, so much the better. But glancing up at him, she caught the abstraction of his gaze bent upon far-off issues. They were her enemies. She had a bitter sense that when religion comes into the field, human rights retire to the wall. He must be told. She held the pan tightly with both hands and leaned back in her chair. Her gaze compelled an answering one. "Brother John," said she, "Judge Hills—Stuart Hills—is on his deathbed."

"I know it," replied the Elder unmoved. "I went over to see him, but they wouldn't let me in."

"He's on his deathbed," repeated Julia, as if she knocked at his dull brain. "And I sha'n't leave town until he's gone." He looked at her in a kindly questioning. A hopeless anger stirred her. In her eyes, this old woe loomed colossal; yet it was invisible to him, for whom her blood was paid. "Fifty odd year ago," she said roughly, "I wanted to marry him. I should if—if I could."

It is not easy to show the heart to our own kin. Because her mind dwelt always on this grief, she was keen to every phase of it. The picturesque aspect of it flashed before her at every point; and now she saw herself making that confidence blushing, as she might have done it those fifty-odd years ago. The sharp reality of the contrast gave her a bitter amusement. The Elder, recalled to the life of this world, looked at her startled. Marrying was not for him. Never, in his first madness, had he guessed it was for her; and after that, she had been living her spiritually cloistered life. He laid his hand on one of hers, both gnarled and yellow.

"Poor Julia," he said tenderly. "I wish it had been different. I wish he could have cared."

She looked him in the face, and her seasoned spirit stood unflinching. So starved had she been, so silent in her chosen grave, that even this poor irony was soothing to her. Why should he know? Her phantom was one of an irrevocable past. Slowly her face relaxed. She smiled upon him with a kindliness greater than his own; she must always love the more, because she knew the face of sacrifice. "We can't have everything," she said quietly. "It was something you never wanted, John."

"No," said the Elder, settling into a chair, while she went on with her work, "I never did. I was called—from the first. But now, when I'm almost ready to lay down my bones, I see how good the earth is—how sweet it is to them that live as nature does."

Her hands trembled over their task. At that moment the ways of life seemed to her inscrutable. Why had he come so long a path to learn what any nesting bird could have told him years ago? "I'm glad you said it," he went on. "You needn't speak again; but we'll stay. Yes, we'll stay. I see what a hard row you've had to hoe, tramping here and yonder when you wanted a home and little things about you. That would have been better. That would have been nearer right. Well, I wish he'd cared." He got up and walked hastily away. She understood his shyness. He could hear the confessions of men and women who cried upon God, either in grief or sin, but because she was of his own blood, her soul must keep its veil before him. They had approached too near. Now they would stand out-

wardly aloof for a time, though that nearness could never be forgotten. So she sat and marvelled over all the past, and plucked a little of the sweetness sure to blossom sometime over graves.

Nancy, hearing their voices, had gone out to the garden beds; but now that Elder Kent was sauntering down the road, she came in and, sitting down, regarded Julia absently. "What a lazy thing I am!" she said. "I let you and mother do it all. Give me the peas. I'll pick them over."

But Julia shook her head and tidily sifted out the refuse. She worked very hard and fast nowadays. It was easier.

"I suppose we mustn't care about comfort, even for other folks," said Nancy irrelevantly, "or money. You gave up all you had, didn't you?"

Julia smiled at her in a mild, satirical fashion.

"We had quite a piece of land," she answered, "and the old homestead, and some money. When mother died, John sold his half and gave it to the poor; so I gave mine. I threw it in because I didn't care what 'come of me, and if I could have given my blood, I'd have done it. There are times when you can't go far enough."

"But God took care of you?" asked Nancy timidly. She was thinking of her mother. Julia smiled again, and stretched out her lean hands.

"That's what took care of us," she said. "I've sewed the ends of my fingers off. He thinks I do it because I like to help 'round. I've knit, and braided rags. Folks save up work three months ahead because old Julia's coming. You know how it is here in this house. Your mother's waited all summer to get that quilting done. We'll set it up this afternoon." She rose practically and took her way to the kitchen to seek another job.

But Nancy detained her with beseeching hand. "The Bible says, 'Take no thought,'" she ventured.

Julia paused, looking down into the pan, that same sad smile playing about her lips.

"I don't know anything about Bible sayings," she replied. "I've heard 'em so much they go into one ear and out of t'other. They're like the wind that blows. But here are we, brother and I. We turned over what we had to the poor-farm. They built two new barns with it, and lightning struck 'em, one after another, and they burnt to the ground. And we're old folks, and perhaps we shall die under a fence, and perhaps the county'll have to support us. That's all I know." She went on into the kitchen, but presently she came back, animated, fierce, as Nancy had seen her in the woods. "But I can tell you this," said she. "You can talk about calling and election all you like, but you get to be an old woman, and this is what you've learned. We're

made to live here, here in this world. Time enough for another when you get there. That's all. Your mother want the fire blazed?"

Still, Nancy knew she was to go. If God demanded the sacrifice of her mother as well as herself, should she refuse it?

That afternoon as they were sitting about the quilting frame, after Julia and Aunt Lindy had snapped the pattern, a wonderful thing happened. Mrs. Jeffries, who lived at peace with her neighbors but scorned to call on them, suddenly appeared in the way. She wore her best bonnet of ten years ago; for why should one debarred from church by her affliction, and from society by temperament, pluck the latest bloom on-fashion's tree? It was a decent crape, her mourning for the Doctor. But the day being hot, she eschewed her alpaca, and chose instead a sprigged lilac of an earlier date. No one in King's-End would have thought of challenging the consistency of that mourning. The bonnet was its emblem, a part adequately standing for the whole. The four women rose at sight of her, and spools danced merrily on the quilt. Aunt Lindy fell into a state of petrification, recovering herself to mutter, "Well, forever!" and put her thimble on and off her fat and freckled finger. But Mrs. Jeffries remained unmoved.

"Don't let me discommode anybody," she remarked graciously. "I'll set right down here an' look on. Tumbler pattern, ain't it? Ever do a risin' sun?" It was Nancy she addressed, with a courteous persistency to which the girl was all unused. Did she not remember those years when Mrs. Jeffries had scorned her shy neighborliness because Martin came a-courting? But she shouted her answer, looking, as she did so, expectantly for the trumpet.

"My ear-trumpet, dear?" said Mrs. Jeffries in honeyed sympathy. "I forgot it. All I can do, I forgit suthin'. Sometimes it's my handkercher, an' sometimes it's my spec's. I dunno when it's been my trumpet."

Aunt Lindy rolled her eyes. "My heavenly Father!" she ejaculated. She knew all about this fashion of getting the talk to oneself.

"Awful to be tied to it, ain't it?" shrieked Susan in shrill staccato.

"He's up to the new house," returned Mrs. Jeffries sweetly. "The carpenters are packin' up to-day. 'Twon't be long before it's ready to go into." She nodded at Nancy, and Nancy, blushing, felt herself committed to the altar. She was beginning to smile over the irony of life. Martin was giving her up just as his mother had "come 'round."

"I s'pose you'll be packin' up to go in," cried Susan with a harmless indiscretion, whiffing by unheeded.

"So I tell him," said Mrs. Jeffries. "There's real pretty papers now. I said only this mornin', 'I dunno's ever I see papers prettier'n

they be this year. But I don't trust you to pick 'em out. Better get somebody to help you,' says I." Again she smiled at Nancy.

Meantime Julia went on quilting deftly and thinking her own thoughts. The sound of her clicking thimble punctuated the talk. Aunt Lindy opened her mouth at intervals in a windy protest, and then closed it. "She's cranky as ever, for all she's so honeyed," she muttered to Julia. "What's she got into her head now?"

"Oh, don't, Aunt Lindy!" exclaimed Nancy hastily, but the rash one only muttered, "She can't hear!" and Mrs. Jeffries smiled impartially at them all.

"Well, I must be goin'," she said at last. "Nancy, I meant to bring you a tumbler o' my new jell. I'll send it over. Martin'll be comin'."

Susan looked beseechingly at her daughter to forestall denial, and Mrs. Jeffries saw. "He's been ruther busy lately," she explained, "helpin' that Alla Mixon git her deeds an' things settled. But that won't last long. Law, it's 'most over now!" She took Nancy's hand in her mittened fingers, and Nancy knew at last that this was kindness and not contrary winds. And she was grateful. Some one wanted her, at least. "Well," concluded Mrs. Jeffries, "good-day. Come over an' see us." They nodded like cheerful mandarins, and she, adding the country formula, "So do! so do!" stepped briskly away down the path.

The four looked at her with varying interest, and Aunt Lindy from a ruthless scepticism.

"Well," asked she, "how long's it goin' to last? You pass me that thread."

"Change of heart, I guess," commented Susan, glancing sharply at her daughter.

"I don't take much stock in it myself," continued Aunt Lindy.

A sudden apparition darkened the window: Mrs. Jeffries' crape-bound head. Susan gave a little cry, "My suz!" and Aunt Lindy, pricking her finger, echoed the monosyllable, "Suz!"

The guest still smiled with undiminished sweetness. "Nancy," she called. "You come out here a minute. I want to speak to you."

Nancy obeyed, and Mrs. Jeffries led her cautiously down to the gate, where they might talk unheard. She took the girl's hand and patted it. "You look real pale," said she.

"It isn't that!" cried Nancy, from a maiden shame, "I've had things happen to me."

But the visitor, still smiling, could not hear. "I want you to come down to tea, some day soon," she said eagerly, "when that Alla goes. 'Twon't be long. I'll let ye know." She looked in the girl's face with a tenderness Nancy had never seen in her before. "There!

there!" said she. "It'll all come out right." She went away down the road nodding and smiling, and Nancy, half vexed, half moved, went back to the house. Her mother met her, all excitement.

"Well," she began, "I guess it's easy to see which way the wind blows there. She dressed up an' come over here a-purpose to show you she's on your side."

"O mother!" cried Nancy, "I should think you'd be ashamed to talk so. There aren't any sides!"

"Yes, there is, too," said Susan stubbornly. "There's yours and Alla Mixon's. He's begun to go with her, an' not to blame either, you treated him so. An' his mother's come over here to call, an' show where she stan's. An' I'm glad an' thankful, for one."

"It's no use talking so, mother," said Nancy from her depths of resolution. "I've nothing to do with such things. I told you before, I'm going to preach the gospel."

"Preach the cat's foot!" cried Susan. "One night I lay awake thinkin' about that, an' the next you cut up to wash that baby, an' I'm worried to death. I wish you was like other girls."

That was a loving lie; but Nancy took it full in the heart, and bled. It seemed to her that only her mother's blame was needed to complete this bitter year. She would not answer, but she salved her wound by the certainty that some day everybody would be sorry. She went in and quilted in a thrifty martyrdom, and Susan, looking at her across the frame, thought achingly how entirely admirable she was. When they set the supper-table she did remark drily, "You're a good girl," and Nancy was satisfied.

VII.

So far the baby had played the part of an unresisting puppet; now she took matters into her own hands and fell ill. With the first wail of suffering not to be accounted for by wind or a healthy temper, Luke's heart stopped its beating, only to bound again with that terrible premonitory throb born of fear for what we love. In that instant he realized that she was flesh of his flesh: through loneliness, indeed, he had won to a double fatherhood. He loved her,—warm, perverse, exacting little bit of mortality. His natural self-confidence had not lessened in the main, through nursery warfare, though there had been days when, confronted by problems that only mothers tolerate, he hated her even while he loved. "God only knows what I'm goin' to do," he got in the habit of muttering when he dressed her; God might be a myth, but the phrase had not lost potency. Yet, one after another, those gales had been weathered, and he took heart. She was a trouble, that he owned to himself, but a trouble he could manage. It was not so hard to take care of a baby, after all.

But that triumph was of yesterday. Now, when she cried without ceasing and her cheek grew angry red, he was beside himself. Should he go down into the village and ask for old wives' wisdom? Own himself beaten, and have the story carried to Horners'? Or should he fly for a doctor, only to be given that odious recipe of "woman's care"? Neither, quite yet. But the smithy was closed, and no one saw him trundling the little cart "down along" to the store. Big Joan came up and stood colossal in the road. Luke saw her, and held his obstinate purpose with an iron hand, lest he weaken and beg her to come in. At that moment the baby was asleep; so he stood by the window and answered his besieger glance for glance.

"Yes," she said coolly, "I've come up to spy out the land. Mis' Horner says you've killed an' eat her. Where is she?"

"She's on my bed."

"How's she look?"

"Same's any young one, I s'pose."

Joan shook her head at him, and, with an incidental movement of her huge arm, tossed aside a fallen branch. "When she come up here," she answered, "she wa'n't same as any. She was the fattest baby I ever see: like a Mullingar heifer, beef to the heels."

"You'll wake her up," he warned her hastily, lest that betraying wail begin again. "How's old Mis' Horner?"

"Sick. Wore out, cryin'. Yeller's a duck's foot."

Luke smiled, because smiling made a part of his warfare, but he was conscious of not really wishing the old woman ill. If the child could live, and look at him again with impish eyes, he knew, in his sick soul, how little he cared about the downfall of his enemies.

"Don't you want the rest of her clo'es?" asked Joan.

"No; I'm goin' to pay, by-me-by, for what I've had. I tore that dress she had on when she come, but I can make it good."

"That old sprig? Law! 'twa'n't wuth the powder to blow it up. What you so slicked up for, 'round the yard?"

Luke frowned. He had cleared his mountain lawn as if it were a garden, and piled a brush-heap beside the house. He was only waiting for a north wind before burning it. Nancy should find the little domain snug and trim when she chose to come. He turned away without answering, and Big Joan, calmly cognizant of human warfare and the beauty of peace, swung down the hill-side, holding her skirts above mammoth ankles. Many years ago Joan had been in love, and she had recovered from that fever, strong to enjoy the breath of life and let her neighbors draw it as they chose. She would not "meddle nor make:" not because, like the village, she dreaded hostile spirits, but because she was now only a looker-on. She still loved the baby; yet not too much. Joan was sworn not to depend on any answering kind-

liness. She knew it would be well for Luke to sink the feud and let the child come sanely home,—yet it was not hers to urge the crisis.

After she was gone, he had a moment of that quietude begot, in trouble, from the ring of friendly words. The house seemed less lonely. When the baby awoke, she must be better. But she was not better; and he spent the rest of the day in a fevered attendance upon her, walking up and down the little room singing. And because he knew no soothing tunes he sang,

“Jesus, lover of my soul,”

and never thought of irony. It was only needful to put the baby to sleep.

At nightfall she did drowse a little, and, worn with anxiety, sick from lack of food, he looked upon her with an agonizing gaze. In the dusk of the room she seemed unreal and pitiful,—a poor little change-ling whimpering away from life. He rushed out of the house and ran, hatless and distraught, down the hill and into the Eliot yard. Nancy was on the porch alone. The very sight of her seemed a deliverance, her solitude a happy omen. She was brooding there in the dark, her head bent low. Nancy looked very sweet and real, but she felt old from the perplexity of a universe gone wrong. She started when Luke appeared before her, running noiselessly in his old shoes, and shadowy as a night-bird. His face foreboded tragedy.

“O Nancy!” he gasped, “come out a minute. I don’t want anybody to hear.” She hesitated and he besought her. “Suthin’s happened. O Nancy, come!”

“Is it the baby?” she whispered, following him down the path. He opened the gate for her, and they stepped out into the road. He turned homeward, and Nancy, with her old sense of following the spirit, kept pace with him. He was drawing dreadful breaths, every one a sob, and her heart ached to comfort him. “Is it the baby?” she asked again.

He stopped a moment and looked up voicelessly into the dark sky. “She’s sick,” he groaned at last.

“You’ve got to have somebody that knows more than I,” said Nancy, pausing; but he started on, fearing to let her hesitate. She followed him, irresolute.

“You come,” he urged, looking back at her. “You’ll tell me what you think, an’ we’ll see what’s best. I’ll do it. Yes, I’ll do it, Nancy, if you’ll only tell.”

She thought his mind was with the child, and so she might be frankly sorry for him. But the relief of her presence was acute, and he grew almost happy with the terrifying exaltation of trouble under the shining of great joy. Her quietude seemed like that of mother and wife in one.

"Nancy!" he cried, "Nancy!"

"Yes."

"Stop a minute right here. I've got to stop. I've been on the go two days an' three nights. I guess I ain't eat much either. Wait one minute." He stood trembling beside her, and Nancy waited in a sweet, maternal patience. He turned to her sharply, but his voice fell low: "Nancy, I can't ever let you go. I've got to have you. O Nancy! Will you?"

His need of her called loudly, and all her old ascetic spirit sprang up and ranged itself with him. If she wished to do God service, was not this her place? When he should believe and bow the knee, perhaps they might go together and win souls. Puritan tradition was strong in her; she deified the harder task only because it was too hard.

"I can't promise," she answered slowly. "I've got to talk with the Elder. But maybe I will."

She spoke innocently, foreseeing nothing; but that instant his arms were about her, and she felt his fevered breath upon her cheek. There was a rustling in the field near by, but that she did not hear, to be impressed as she had been lately with the certainty that some one followed her when she went out after dark. She heard nothing and knew nothing save that Luke was holding her in a hideous mastery. Without conscious will of her own, she set her hands against his breast and pushed him from her. He fell to one side, impelled not only by her touch but the moral impact of her recoil. "Oh!" cried Nancy fiercely, "I hate you!"

A man jumped over the fence above and came walking along the road. It was Martin Jeffries. He passed them with a nod and went on, not once looking back. Had he seen? How much had he seen? Nancy felt, in the double revulsion, as if her world reeled under her. It was sufficiently against the course of nature to see Martin with another girl; it was a deeper stain that he should find her also light o' love. Thrown from that high altitude whence she was accustomed to reprove him, indignation surged in her, but only against the man at her side.

"Oh!" she cried to Luke, "oh, how I do hate you!"

He stood motionless, his arms hanging. Nancy would have fled homeward, save that she feared encountering the other man; for sure though she was that love lay dead between them, she trembled back from his reproach. So she stood still and said again, as an excuse for staying, "I hate you!"

Luke moved towards her gropingly. "You said maybe you would," he muttered. His hoarse voice sickened her.

"But you needn't have come near me!" she cried. "It's one thing to go up and take care of folks; it's another—oh, my soul! my

soul!" She put her hands to her face and brushed angrily at the splashing tears. "We won't have any more mistakes about this. Don't you ever come near me again. If the baby's sick, you go down and tell Big Joan. I won't step foot in your house."

She turned and fled; and Luke, weakly stumbling towards the home he feared to reach, heard only three words beating at his ears: "I hate you! I hate you!" He dragged himself up to the little house, lying dark and very still. Was the baby dead? He did not care. But when he had struck a light, dropping one match after another from a nerveless hand, he found that the baby was awake, that she was no better—and he did care. She had cried herself into a piteous acquiescence, and while she lay blinking under the light, unlovely in her misery, he felt within him the welding of human ties. This little thing had never turned against him. She was his.

"O God!" he groaned. "O God!" and, falling prone beside her, he prayed. Whatever he said, it was from an unfathered heart to the Tyrant above Who had cunningly waited for the moment of keenest need to pounce upon him. He seemed to himself a beleaguered soul, who, now that starvation lurked within the citadel, must capitulate to an enemy armed with omnipotence.

"I'll do anything," he kept saying, "if You'll only let her be." He tried drearily to remember phrases he had once called cant, in case they should be fleeter-winged to reach the ear accustomed to them, as in time of sickness we seek a formula of cure. But all he could do was to moan, "I'll do anything, anything!" What tribute had he to offer to the Tyrant? His heathen fetish, his wicked books! He gathered them in his arms, ran with them to the yard, and tossed them on his pile of brush. Never mind where the wind lay. Though the house went with them, they should burn. He and the baby could flee out into the night, safe if the heavenly foe could only be appeased. He touched a match to his sacrificial pile, and the dry brush burned. He stood by it, shaking in a fanatical frenzy, and when the wind caught up a shower of sparks and rained them on the house, he only smiled. Let the One above either burn or slay as pleased Him. God would save what He chose. It was futile to combat heaven.

Sally Horner, a quivering thing chained to a bed of nettles, lay in her room at the foot of the hill. Big Joan was out neighboring, and Obed sat on the kitchen doorstep, smoking a placid pipe. To the woman with an inert body and seething heart, it seemed as if the powers of all the world were leagued against her. Night after night she had lain there in the dusk, listening to the hideous summer sounds, and planning what she would do if, like the exasperating creatures about her, she had her legs. It would be easy then to scale colossal heights. She made no limit to her achievements. All she needed was to walk

the earth again. Hurrying plans, all futile, pieced themselves together in her head. Obed had promised that after haying he would drive over to Ryde and ask a lawyer about "the rights on't;" but she knew the cause of his delay was neither haying nor any other ancient reason made to put off womenfolks. It was because the lawyer, holding with her, would spur him on to action; and Luke, offended, then might burn his barn! So, resolved to take counsel of none, since all betrayed her, she lay praying her fiery prayers and scoffing at herself for wasted words. Luke's bonfire blossomed rosily, a gorgeous flower of night. The horror of it held her silent. His house was burning, and he might be away from home. Where was the baby? She had learned her lesson well; nobody would help her. Not a word did she speak to Obed, sitting out there with his pipe, and no doubt mourning the family calamity. She threw back the sheet and, with an old-time motion of her youth, when she used to spring out of bed for a day's spinning, set her feet upon the floor. Where were her clothes? Some of them in the bedroom, and groping there, she unearthed from a wilderness of calico the articles known as a short-gown and petticoat, and threw them on. There were no shoes; but she found a pair of old rubbers and slipped them on her feet. Then, as she was, not covering her night-capped head, she ran noiselessly into the road and up the hill. She had the strength of those under divine constraining. Sand sifted into her rubbers in her shuffling run, and once, with a muttered exclamation that was not of the sanctuary, she stopped to shake them free. Through all her journey she thought of nothing; not her past weakness, nor the beauty of the night and her own good fortune in hastening untrammelled through it. She only knew she was in haste.

And so she came upon Luke, standing by his bonfire and still tending it with a mechanical zeal. The books were burned; but he was throwing on limb after limb from his woodpile near at hand. Even their ashes should be consumed. His face glowed crimson from the heat; with wild eyes and hair disordered, he seemed beside himself,—a demon raking the embers hither and thither with a green sapling, and ever feeding the flame. To Sally Horner's one glance, cast upon him in passing, he loomed malignant, though no more terrible than her mind had ever pictured him. She flitted past into the house, and he, recovering from the sight of her night-capped head, followed. When he entered, she was on the floor by the lounge, where the child lay fretting. Her soft old cheek was against the baby's foot. She seemed to be devouring it with love. Luke smiled bitterly, and told himself that was the answer he might have expected. God had sent his enemy. Yet when he saw how her hands dwelt upon the baby without disturbing it, when he guessed how the mother-hunger had ached in her since she was a young wife and her own child fed at her

breast, he fell back a step and forbore to sneer. He loved the child; but here was a love he could not approach, because it struck root in primal being. This was the little bit of earth that held her to the earth.

His step was noiseless, but she felt him near. When she could withdraw her hungry eyes from the untidy little creature, she glanced up at him, quite incidentally, as if already sure of victory. "Is ary one through?" she asked.

"One what?" inquired the uninitiated male.

She inserted her finger gently between the child's lips, and the baby mumbled at it.

"Poor little creatur'!" purred Mrs. Horner. "Granny's girl! Poor little creatur'! All swelled up, ain't they, darlin'? Ache like all possessed? What'd you give her to cut 'em on?" she asked briskly, addressing Luke.

"Cut what?"

"Didn't you give her anything? Not a ring, nor even an old door-knob? My soul! I shouldn't think menfolks knew enough to go in when it rains. I wonder they open their mouths for feedin' time."

The bucket in the well went down with a prolonged rumble, but neither of them noticed.

"Here's the ladder!" called a man without, and Big Joan responded:

"Up with ye! You're the lightest. I'll pass the pails."

But the two within were absorbed in their nursery talk; they had forgotten to be enemies.

"She's been awful sick," volunteered Luke, noting with a sacrificial pang how the child turned to the tenderer touch.

"She's awful sick now. Ain't you done nothin' for her?"

"I went over to the herb-woman." He spoke weakly, knowing the fact was vulnerable. "She told me to steep some catnip."

"Catnip! Cat's foot! Did you tell her she was teethin'?"

"I didn't know it," confessed Luke, from a humility never induced in him by the powers above.

"Luke Evans, you better come out an' bring the baby," called Big Joan at the door. "Your house's afire. We're doin' all we can to save it, but the shingles are ketched."

Mrs. Horner gathered the baby into her arms, and ran out across the road. There she sat down upon a mossy bank, and held the child delightedly. Luke followed, with no sort of interest, to see Elder Kent standing on the roof, while Joan passed him pails of water in a marvellous succession.

"Come along down," called the householder. "Let the damn thing go."

"House an' barn?" inquired Joan, letting down the bucket with a clang. She loved the occasion. It fitted her great strength.

"The whole business. Let her burn."

Elder Kent opened his lips and began singing, because he could work faster, as the rhythm-led sailor pulls at the ropes,

"How lost was my condition,"

and Big Joan sang too, with a love of sound if not significance. Her cross was at her throat, and good St. Joseph in her pocket; but she could "join in" with any heretic. The world was very big to Joan. She caught a tin milk-pail from the stake, and forced it into Luke's unwilling hand.

"Here," said she drily, "you take this. T'other's heftier." She gave him a little admonitory push towards the well; and because she would not yield, he had to. Only to rid himself of human things, he fought the fire as madly as he had builded it, his face already distorted with a pain not yet quite recognized. When only the smell of smoke lingered in the hot air, Joan turned down her sleeves and wiped her face with her apron, dripping wet. She crossed the road to old Mrs. Horner, sitting there lulling the child in a happy dream.

"How'd you get out o' bed?" she asked.

Sally Horner looked up, startled. Nothing was farther from her thoughts. She was in Paradise. Asked how she came there, she felt a tremor, like any other way-worn soul. "I guess I'll be gittin' down along home," she said faintly. "Joan, I dunno's I *can* git there."

It was the moment of a lifetime. Joan saw it and chose her course. "Lemme carry the baby into the house," said she indifferently, "then I'll help ye down the hill."

Old Mrs. Horner straightened. "Leave the baby?" cried she. "I'd ruther die in my tracks!" Her eyes followed Luke, bearing the ladder to the barn. She rose and stumbled, but gathered herself again. "She's terrible heavy," she murmured, "but I can lug her. Quick! 'fore he turns the corner!" She started down the hill, Joan following, and watching her with keen intelligence.

Joan felt quite safe in the plenitude of her strength and quickness. She had no mind that either the child or the old woman should fall. She was pleased, too, with her own forbearance in merely following on when, coming homeward earlier, she had seen Mrs. Horner scudding out into the night. It showed her anew that mortal kind was meant to work out its own salvation. Safely away from the house, in the shade of the old white pine, Sally Horner paused and then sank, not weakly, but with a husbanded strength, upon the rock below.

"Joan," said she, "you go back an' have a word with him. He's treated me decent enough to-night, an' I s'pose he does set by the

little creatur'. You go an' ask him—tell him I've took her. Ask him——" She choked upon the words. A moral decency constrained her. But what if he refused? Should she yield her claim? She did not know. The touch of that small, hot hand was stronger upon her than fear of law or gospel. Joan was three steps away when she called again: "Joan, tell him—tell him he can come an' see her. He'll be welcome." She would have conceded anything to buy her treasure back. More than that, she had learned through bitter deprivation what loss might mean to an unfriended soul.

Joan went into the cottage where the two men sat, on either side the fireplace, by the light of a single candle. Luke's head hung low, and he gazed at the uneven bricks. He remembered dimly how he had swept the hearth that morning, lest Nancy should come. The dust was there already. So soon was work undone. The Elder seemed like a silent watcher beside the sick or dead.

"What is it now?" Luke asked, glancing up with lacklustre eyes.

Joan hesitated, filled with a sudden mercy. She could not see, from her own detached place in life, how human things should suffer so in traps of their own contriving. She pitied them, as we pity the stumbling child. They seemed to her like the midges circling now about the light. Still, her eye on one silly moth, she swept him away, and saved him for the moment from the flames.

"She wants you should come down an' see the baby whenever you feel to."

He gave a little gesture of dismissal with a trembling hand. "My pipe's out," he told her. "I've got no more to say."

Joan knew too much to probe him further. She turned away, beckoning the Elder after her. "Ask him to make you some tea," she whispered at the door. "Make him drink some. He's crazed." She hurried into the night, and Elder Kent, as simply as a child, went back and asked for food. He was beat out, he said, with a recurrence to homely speech, always a custom when common sorrows cried for help. Could he have some tea?

Luke went heavily about making it, and when the table was spread, fell to and ate mightily. He fed like a man whose mind is elsewhere, but in whom the mechanism of life has started and goes clicking on in spite of him. Then he drowsed a little, and the Elder bade him lie down a spell. But at the mention of quiescence, Luke was all alive again; and it was only when he had dulled himself anew with napping that the Elder rose and led him unresisting to his bed. There he slept till day. When he awoke, his trouble throttled him. He was alone, bereft of the warm little presence he loved, bereft of the girl whose breathing memory lingered still about the place. He turned over on his pillow and sobbed despairingly.

"How lost was my condition!"

rose in a mellow triumph in the room beyond. The Elder was stepping about, getting breakfast, and because he was unused to serving, droll deeds were doing there. Luke heard him, and rubbed his hot eyes. For the moment, he knew what it is to be a child; only the Elder was his father, not the tyrant God. Stumbling and shamefaced, he went into the kitchen and found the old man watching the fire in a serene content. "I have found the eggs," said Elder Kent, mildly triumphant, "and some coffee. But I should hardly ventur' to cook them."

Luke plunged his face into cold water, and felt the life of the body surging up to meet this premonition of death within the soul. He cooked the breakfast with a careful thrift, and they ate together. Then the Elder repeated the Lord's Prayer alone, to the Amen; but Luke could only stare vacantly out through the open door at the fringing woods and feel his pain, as the brute feels it, unhealed by memory or hope.

"Now I'll be off," said the Elder. "I'm going to cut across lots over to Pillcott and see when they plan to have camp-meeting. But I shall come back." He went swiftly, like those who feel themselves to be divinely sent. On the pasture upland he turned about, hearing the sound of footsteps. Luke, afraid of solitude, was following on behind. He could not be alone.

Keenly as the Elder seemed to feel all sorrow, perhaps he never quite understood the human heart save when it thirsted after God. To him the rending of mortal ties meant only an alarum sounded to make strong the heavenly ones. Just what dog-like devotion had sprung up in Luke's heart, he did not know. But he did guess that here was one who, whether consciously or not, thirsted after the living God; and he held out a hand in welcome. But Luke did not look at him. He came striding on in silence, humiliated by his need, yet not defying it; and all day they walked together. When at Pillcott the Elder talked to one or another, Luke stood by, not listening. He bought bread and cheese, and they went back into the woods and sat all the afternoon long by a little dark spring on the edge of the pines. The Elder's mind was on his mission, what he had learned, and what he should show to others; but Luke sat in a deadly dullness. To be near this human thing, so warm and yet aloof and unexacting, was like a soft air upon the face. It fanned a little, though it could not heal.

On their homeward track, they came to a parting of the ways, and Luke took the one leading by a roundabout course straight into the village. Elder Kent followed him without question, and in the late afternoon they walked up the road towards Sally Horner's. The Elder

tramped steadily, his head bent and a little to one side, as if thought were too heavy for him; Luke was the one to follow now. It would have seemed to an onlooker as if they had no connection in their journeying. So lax was the Elder's hold on human affairs that he forgot what significance the Horner place must have for his companion, and Luke, keeping an eye on his plodding form, wondered whether he would go in to inquire whether the baby were alive or dead. Yet the windows stood wide open to the summer breeze, and seeing that, the stricture on his throat gave way a little. If the child were dead, they would have closed the blinds and turned the house into one of mourning.

A rabble of men and boys appeared in the mown field across the way, striking out towards the road. They talked excitedly and mopped their streaming faces. Luke stopped opposite the Horner gate, awaiting them; to his irritated anticipation it seemed now as if any village stir meant further harrying. He remembered the gang sent up to rescue the child and, morbidly keen to any touch of omen, wondered if this too could have something to do with him. The Elder, missing the sound of his footfall, paused also, and those King's-End sons and fathers, coming on with heavy tread, strode over the wall. Their boots were caked with mud, and Eph Cummings carried a great coil of rope, looped loosely. They nodded with little grunts of recognition, but though the usual "How-are-ye's?" were lacking, it was not from harsh intention. They simply knew Luke had been concerned in an emotional scene the night before, and were shamefaced for him, knowing their own hatred of town talk. But Obed dropped silently out of the crowd and slipped in at his own gate. He hurried into the house and shut the door, without a glance behind. Luke understood. Obed was going in to hide the child, or at least to put his womenfolk on guard. So the fools about him, having given him a bad name, were bent on his deserving it! The men dispersed, all but Eph Cummings, who, when social cogs turned rusty, could never for his life withhold the oil of pottering talk.

"Be'n down to the old shaker-bed to haul out Kane's wild heifer!" he explained amicably. "In up to the belly. Hardly stren'th to loo. Thin as a rail, though, jumpin' fences, or we never could ha' stirred her without tackle an' falls. Too beat out to be driv' home. Kane hopped her there. Expect the Elder'll be down exhortin' of her arter dark."

The Elder smiled a little and went on. But Eph nudged Luke and gave him the wink of comradeship. "Say," he volunteered, in genial acceptance of confirming testimony, "d'ye know Sally Horner's up an' round?"

Luke nodded. He was hungry for news.

"There's Joan!" cried Eph joyously, seeing no reason why curiosity should go unslaked. "Now you up an' ask her. She's got suthin' to say."

But Luke stood still, sick at that moment from the clarity of afternoon sunlight; it left no dark to hide in. He looked down into the dusty road and absently shuffled his feet, as a boy does when the world confronts him. Joan paused at the gate. The sun lying on her red hair, her shrewd face, and arms bare to the elbow, turned her into a messenger of good; but Luke, even if he had looked at her, had not the aid of hope for wise interpreting.

"Come along in an' see her," she called, and Eph gave him a seconding push. Luke shook his head. Hysterical passion was rising in him; he knew how much more likely it was that he should be bidden to look upon the child dead than living. "They called the new doctor, the one over to Ryde," said Joan satirically. "A little white stuff in two tumblers, an' a clean spoon for each! It's like the water o' Glaskie, it neither smells nor tastes. But the fever's gone down, I'll say that for him."

Luke gained a momentary courage. His dry lips moved.

"Then she ain't——" he faltered.

"Ain't what?"

"I thought she might be dead."

"You thought!" Joan raged in scornful kindness. "You'd think anything to be on t'other side o' the fence. She looks more or less like a baby now. If I'd had my way, I'd set her up for a scarecrow, the style you fixed her. Come in an' look at her, an' drink down a cup o' tea. Mis' Horner's so tickled she'd break bread with the devil."

But Luke set forth at a quickened step up the hill. He passed the Elder with averted face, set on betraying none of that fierce joy within him. "Only let her be!" he kept whispering to the unknown God; and so he hurried on to his shelter, as remote from all that homely life below as an eagle's nest in the top of the great pine—and as lonesome.

VIII.

AFTER tragedy is well over, the real agony begins. When the desolate house looks about on its own nakedness, then is the true inventory of loss. Luke sat that night in his little kitchen and, staring at the moonlight on the floor, shuddered at life as it was and as it would be to-morrow. He saw but one thing, like a face filling up the darkness. His lips had no name for it, but the defeated soul called it destiny. This house had seen his beginning, two muddy streams of hateful ancestry tending together and mingling in one blacker still. His mother, a crystal current, had been swept on unnoted, and his father, shamelessly acquiescent, reflected all the vices of squalid forebears. Luke

lifted his hands in their fancied fetters, and would have clenched them in the face of the power that first created and then tortured him. But he dared not. The power might slay the child. At times he remembered Nancy, but not to mourn for her as a man in health mourns his defeated hopes. The cruelty of her repulse had ranged her on the side of an alien universe. Her refusal was not what any man has a right to expect from the woman he loves in vain, and he felt still the lashing of her inherited scorn. He knew, as he sat there, that the moment of her recoil from him was the one when he had given up. He had made a fair trial of life, and it was not for him. Here he was, sober, hardworking, and yet a Larrups. Because he had been neither rich nor religious, and most of all because his stream was muddied at the fount, he must serve and get no wages out of life. His tortuous way led back to the mysterious wrong of having himself been born; for he knew these country folk were not impressed by money nor greatly through church membership. But they did prize honest stock. So the old sore festered in him, and again he told himself that life was done.

The room darkened like an omen, as the moon went under a cloud, and he sickened at its loneliness. So used was he to the child's light movements, that he began to listen for breathing in the dark. Walls were hateful to him, and he crept out into the night, pursued by the intangible phantoms of the place, and gaining a momentary confidence by taking his gun from the corner. While he stood outside the heavens brightened. It was one of those nights when clouds fleet over a clear sky, and alternately obscure the moon or are dyed, rainbow-ringed, where she touches them. He paused on his way down hill and looked back at the little house, for something told him he should never see it again. His farewell to it was included in the greater farewell to life itself. Then, heavy under his load of failure, he walked on, his gun over his shoulder and his brain perplexed. He meant to seek the "open door," so hospitable to souls distraught, but he was clumsy about the way. These country people despised the man who takes his own life; almost as well here to be a murderer as a suicide. He was resolved to die by his own hand, yet he wanted to die cleverly and so by accident. For there was the child. If she lived, no one should point and whisper, "Her mother——" the voice would fall there. "Her father killed himself." But he held his old fowling-piece closer and went on, confused.

The Eliot house lay dark. One glance told him that, and he walked by without turning his head again. He thought there was a murmur of women's voices from the steps, but he strode the faster. If he should meet Nancy now, he could not look at her. If she held out her hand, he would not speak. She was a part of the world where

he ate and slept, but where he had no right of holding. At the Horners' he walked softly, and scanned the windows with an anxious care. The two front rooms were dark, but a little glimmer of light diffused itself delicately from the back of the house where a kitchen lamp was burning. Luke caught himself shaking all over as he stood there, till a certain note arose and pierced him with delight: the baby's crying. It sounded far less piteous, but more masterful.

"Little devil!" he muttered admiringly.

The kitchen lamp came into the sitting-room, and with it old Mrs. Horner's head silhouetted against the light. She bent over the cradle, and he could see her swaying it back and forth. "Joan, you come in here an' help lift her up," he heard her call.

But Joan, hanging her milkpails on the stakes, walked round the side of the house instead, and down the path to the road. "Stop where ye be!" she ordered, as Luke was moving on. "News from the front." He waited, and Joan came up to him, pulling down her sleeves. "Glory be to God! the boot's on t'other foot," said she. "I've hung round the mountain long enough, listenin' for that little pint o' cider, an' now you can take your turn. Livin's nothin' but a teeter-board: first you go up and then it's me. Comin' in?"

"No."

"I s'pose not. If anybody told ye not to, you'd break in an' take root. Oh, she holds her own. She's got too much father an' grandmother in her to peter out. But it's the greatest go-round for a teethin' this county ever see. It'll be in the almanac another year. What you got that gun for?"

This, he knew, was his chance for some plausible story which should account for him afterwards. But he did not know what story. "I thought I'd take it along," he said lamely. "I thought maybe I'd go on the tramp."

"Tramp! you tramp home an' go to bed, an' open the shop to-morrer. Law! I should think life was a mile long, the way you squander it, runnin' 'round with your head cut off. Tramp! which way you goin'?"

Chiefly because the words were in his memory he answered, "Over t' the shaker-bed. Likely's not that heifer's loose by now."

The heifer was not Joan's business, nor, since he rejected her counsel, was he. So she gave a glance at the moon, quite as if she were on equal terms with it, remarked, "Nice, ain't it? Light as cork!" and returned to the house.

Luke, only because chance had marked out his way, wandered through the field to the lowland pasture, significant from the bog with its treacherous acre where more than one beast had been snared. King's-End said the shaker-bed had no bottom. For the accepted

chronicle of the place you might ask any boy old enough to talk and swap stories. An inherited set of legends followed it to the centre of the earth, where victims lay, all neatly packed in one big pyramid. Now it was drawing Luke, not only by its eeriness, but from the wealth of that dark legendry. If he should never be seen again, Joan would tell how he went down to the shaker-bed to look after the heifer. And he need not be found; for, faithful to his traditions, he knew the bog had no bottom as indubitably as he knew it twenty years before. To be dragged under by that invisible force was still a horror beyond his tolerating; but, with his arms free, he could use his old shooting-piece, even though the slimy trap had him by the feet—and then the earth, an enemy to the last, would clutch him to his burial. The theory worked quite simply: so simply that it read like a story about some one else whose griefs were long since over.

He climbed the fence, higher than King's-End usually builds, and broke through the skirting alders and the lighter growth of the lowland. Then suddenly he seemed to fall into a dream. For a voice called him by his name.

"Luke!" it sounded, and again "Luke! Luke!"

He stood still, and the brush about him trembled to rest where he had stirred it. The moon sailed into a space of blue, and her revealing was more terrible than the dark. "Luke!" rang the voice. "Luke!" The tremor of fear crawled over him, spine and scalp, and moved the hair upon his head. He heard in his own mind, like an attendant echo, the words from an old story: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" They made him aware that, not for the child but for himself, he feared the unknown God.

A long, sharp bellow cut the air, and he almost cried out with it, though next moment he swore at himself and broke into shamefaced laughter. It was the heifer, calling in pain or fright; and upon her cry came the voice again, "Luke! Luke Evans!" Now he breathed again, and for a childish reason; for some inner sense told him that though God might summon him as Luke, surnames were unknown in the court of heaven.

"O you everlastin' old fool!" he yelled in answer, and started on a run. His death-hunger lay behind, cast by as the swimmer throws off weight. The Elder was in trouble. The slope grew thick with rankest grass, and plunging down, Luke halted at the bog. The preacher was singing now,

"All hail the power of Jesus' name,"

but the words came huskily, and Luke knew why. He saw, in fancy, the mud up to the old man's chin.

"Hush up!" he cried. "Stop that, an' tell me where you be!"

But the Elder adjured him to "Bring forth the royal diadem," and then, after a triumphant slur on "Lord of all," replied cheerfully, "In the shaker-bed."

"Which side? This damn moon won't be out for a fortnight."

The shuddering bellow rent the air again, and Luke, running that way, put his hand on the heifer's flank. He felt her over, while she pulled away from him, unable to free herself. He made out that she had broken from her tether on the higher ground above, and, with her head tied down as they had left her, had either fallen or plunged here, and caught herself again in a trap of her own making; for she had trailed the rope into a group of alders, and now her head was close to the ground, where she snorted in misery. He tugged at the rope and then sawed at it with his old jackknife; again he pulled desperately, and when it parted, she stood silent an instant over incredible liberty, and then, bounding up the slope, went breaking and crackling through the woods. And he had the rope, though threaded yet through the alders.

"Where'd you get in?" he called, listening as he worked. "Horner side?"

"Yes."

"How deep?"

"I don't rightly know."

Luke had a length of rope, and coiled it over his arm. "Why under heavens can't you speak up?" he cried. "What do you want to mumble so for?"

"I can't help it. My mouth's 'most in the mud."

"Lord God! you ain't in up to there? I can't save ye."

"My body's free," said the Elder encouragingly. "It's my legs and arms. I went out on the boards."

"What boards?"

"Them they had to get out to the heifer with. I made a misstep and came down on all fours."

Meantime Luke was trying to locate him from his vantage of firmer ground, and the moon stayed hidden. But the boards taught him something, and he began walking back and forth, skirting the bog, until his foot struck a fence-rail. That was the beginning of the track laid that afternoon. He tried it, feeling his way; where it ended he found another, wider still. "Speak again, can't ye?" he called.

"Here."

"You follered the boards?"

"Yes, and fell off'n the end, either where they stop or where they went under."

Luke set his steps more delicately. The boards had sunken, but so far he could feel them below the mud.

"Where be ye?"

"Here."

The voice was at his feet, so near that he reached over, groping in the darkness; but he touched only the hateful grass of the bog. Then the moon ran out into an ample field of blue, and he saw the Elder, his body and the back of his white head. The revulsion was too much. "You ain't in the shaker-bed at all, blast ye!" cried he.

"I can't say about that," remarked the Elder into the grass. "This seems to answer the same purpose."

Luke stepped into the mud and felt its treachery. It did answer the same purpose. But meantime he set both hands under the old man's armpits and lifted. The mud sucked greedily in leaving, and the captive stood upright. But Luke himself was sinking. His teeth were set and the blood surged into his head and seemed to settle there. One after the other he dragged out his imprisoned feet and floundered back on the boards to rest. The Elder, caked in mud, stood still, as if he chose to stand there.

"I believe I am going down very fast," he announced neutrally. "But it is a great privilege to go feet foremost."

Luke went back a couple of yards and ripped up the boards that were not entirely hidden. He laid them down before the old man in a rude flooring and tossed him the rope.

"Put it under your arms," he ordered. "Cast me the ends. I can't git no sort o' purchase on ye, but I'll pull straight ahead. You let your hands come down on them boards an' crawl like the devil. Push down an' lift yourself out'n the mud. I'll pull."

For a time they strove uselessly. There was a moment when Luke saw that the present unclassified trap was too much for him. He groaned, and at that instant the Elder, his elbows on the boards, first seemed to move. Luke ventured a step, trying the rails, and because they still gave a foothold he put his hands under the old man's arms, and lifted. Hot, panting, both of them, he pulled the Elder to his feet and turned him towards dry land.

"Git along ahead," he gasped. "These boards won't bear two. Gorry! I should think they took down all the fencin' stuff from here to Ryde. Lucky for you! Git along."

Once the Elder fell, but Luke, without waiting for him to recover himself, set him on his feet again, and, putting a muddy arm about him, urged him on. They struck the damp, coarse grass and climbed the little slope. The Elder was weighted with mud. Even his back carried its own particular plaster, where Luke had touched him. He tried to shake himself, and stooped for a futile scraping with a grimy hand; but Luke only picked up his gun and pushed him onward. They climbed the fence and crossed the field without a word; and opposite the Horner house Luke stopped again to listen for that sound

to which his ears were ever now attuned. Darkness and silence: the baby was asleep. At the Eliots', Elder Kent stretched out his hand and began solemnly, "Under God——" But Luke allowed him no delay.

"Come along up to my place," he commanded. "I'll hoe you off an' you can hoe me. You don't want to go stirrin' womenfolks up this time o' night."

The Elder, with a thought of Julia, new to him since he had begun to think of her at all, agreed quite gratefully, and they plodded along the road, all a-light now under the moon. Once on the mountain slope in the shadow of a pine Luke was never after able to pass without thinking of this moment, he began to laugh. He laughed with all the accumulated hysteria of his former grief. Tears coursed down his muddy face and washed pale channels there. He hooted grotesquely, and the echoes made reply. The Elder paid little heed to that interlude, for he was thinking his own thoughts, and treasuring very sacredly some truths he thought God had shown him in the bog.

"O you old Nebuchadnezzar!" cried Luke, between yells of reminiscence. "Down on all fours, eatin' grass! What ye there for, anyway?"

"They said the heifer was there, hopped. I thought maybe she'd come to some harm, and then I heard her loo. Seemed to me I saw her in the bog. There was a black thing out that way."

"That's the old stump the boys hove in there three years ago to show where the bog begun. So you follered out the boards an' tumbled off, an' the heifer looin' on dry land behind ye! Lucky you floundered round face to afore ye sunk. That's the only way I could ha' fetched it."

He set down his gun at the door and went in to strike a light. The Elder from prudential reasons remained outside, looking at the bright heaven, his lips moving earnestly. Luke was building a fire. He set on the wash-boiler, well filled, and when the water was warm poured it into a tub outside the door and bade the Elder take his boots off and step in. With the instinct of a primitive yet thorough housekeeper, he thought it simpler to clean man and clothes together. The old man stood quite patiently a-soak, and Luke attacked him with a broom. No horse was ever gentler under currying.

"It's a good thing we don't always have our way," remarked the Elder. "Brother Winthrop over to Ryde gave me a new black suit, and very well fitting, too. I told Julia it should go into the missionary box, but nothing would do but I must leave it at Susan Eliot's till we came back some day. She said I should need it in time, and lo ye! I do."

They heated more water, and the Elder discarded the mud-stained

garments and left them to dry, while he took a bath and put on Luke's overalls and jumper. Then Evans tubbed in his turn, and in the middle of the night, steaming hot and clean, they sat down outside the door while one smoked a pipe and the other owned that tobacco had a goodly flavor. Luke went into the house for an extra TD, but the Elder shook his head, though he fingered the smooth bowl abstractedly. It had a pleasant feel. Coffee was boiling on the stove and the fragrance floated out to them. Luke took his pipe from his lips and turned to the old man.

"When you was stuck there you called me," said he. "What made you call my name?"

The Elder considered. "I don't know," he said at last. "I thought of Julia, and how she'd be put about. Then I thought of you. So I called you."

"Godfrey!" said Luke. For some reason the answer pleased him mightily. He smoked hard till the pipe rattled in its throat. Then he threw it down. "Le's have some coffee."

They drank together, and lay down within, Evans taking his own bed and his guest the kitchen lounge. Luke was at peace and naturally, he thought, because he was so tired. His body had fought a good fight and then laughed itself free of inky fears; so it ran into a rhythm of well-being. He heard the old man murmuring to himself and smiled scoffingly, yet with tenderness. John Kent "needed a guardeen," he thought; and muttering "Old Nebuchadnezzar!" he was drowsing off to sleep.

"Luke," said the Elder.

"Well, what is it now?"

"When I thought I had but a few minutes more on earth, God showed me what to do."

"He better ha' showed ye before, an' ye wouldn't ha' got in."

"He told me not to fear, to preach the word as I saw it, and let the seed fall where it would. The words should be put into my mouth——"

"Put into your mouth! It don't take God A'mighty to tell you what to holler. 'Luke!' you yelled, like a poll parrot. 'Luke! Luke!' says you, 'Luke Evans!'"

"And you came," concluded the Elder. "If you weren't sent, why did you come?"

"O moonshine! I'm goin' to sleep." But the question had set his eyes wide open. He lay and thought, and when he heard the Elder's peaceful breathing he smiled a little and softly called him by unflattering names.

IX.

DAY was dawning on a world all over flame and dew. The side of the mountain bloomed purple under vestiges of mist, and the fields below, rich in heat and light, had already begun to ripen. Dewdrops lay on the Cumnor pasture so close that, like gems for a mosaic, they needed but a touch to slide together into a crystal sheen. They were threaded on the pasture grass, bobbing from its fringes, and clotted on the spiders' webs hung everywhere to dry. Julia was hurrying home along the trail, scattering at every footstep scores of such jewels, each with its spark of sun. Her eyes were unseeing, save for the cobwebs. These she noted because they prophesied heat, and she knew there would not be air enough in all the summer world for one sick man to breathe. A white-throated sparrow began from the mountain-side the fine thrill of his overture, never to be continued beyond those first arresting notes. She did not listen. The pines were austere in green, moved murmuringly by a delicate breath, and the sky, more blue than white, hung sweetly dappled. But Julia held her skirts high and stepped on, wondering if breakfast would be ready. Her vigil had lasted now too long; she was hollow-eyed yet hawkish, with the look of those at odds with sleep. This last night had been a deadly one of impotent watching, and against her custom she had lurked and suffered until dawn. Then he revived a little, and she heard the doctor predicting one more day.

The Eliot household was up and about, and Susan, seeing her come in, remarked only on the "soppin'" of her feet. It was so common a thing for the Elder to slip away into the dusk, not to be seen until another day, that Susan could tolerate that eccentricity in one of the same blood. Julia, too, might have chosen to seek the spirit on the mountain and fare homeward through the dew. But Nancy, seeing the ever-deepening marks of grief upon her face, followed her upstairs and stood silent while the old woman made herself neat again. Julia shook her head.

"He ain't gone," she said in a harsh monotone. "He's holding out terribly. I've got to go back."

"I should go back," cried Nancy, taught some things herself now by an unsatisfied heart. "I should go in."

Julia nodded. She could speak no more, and afterwards sat silent over her food, forcing it down with a sickening distaste. "I'm going over to the Hills'," she said to Susan when they rose. "Maybe I can do something."

"So do," returned Susan, "if you feel to. I'd ha' gone myself, on'y I thought they'd have so much help. He's holdin' out beyond everything."

It was Nancy who shrank and shivered, for fear some unconsidered speech might rough a wound. Her mother might guess how Julia and Stuart Hills had loved each other in old days, and with the simplicity of the unimaginative mind bring forth some innocent tale connected with the dead. But Julia feared no such poor disaster. The unripe blossom of her life had faded so long before that not a husk was left to lie among the common inheritance of memory. To this little people she was only an old woman offering a gnarled hand to lift an ounce or so in a poor, weighted world. Day by day her instinct of hiding had grown dull. She almost wondered now why she had not sought his side before, and then reminded herself how it would have perplexed him and dizzied his poor brain with futile strivings.

So, with hair put back as smoothly as her locks would ever lie, her decent dress and well-starched apron, she went over to the great house and rang the bell. To the neighbor who met her old Julia seemed no figure of grief, only a kindly soul with time within her gift.

"I thought I'd come over and help round," she said with a simple directness. "I've been over to Susan Eliot's for quite a spell, but everything's done up there now and we're ahead of the work. There must be room for one more here, having sickness so."

The door opened to her; she was needed. Judge Hills had been "an unconscionable time in dying," and his household had not husbanded its strength. The village nurse was beginning the day with a sick headache, and old Miss Hills, said the neighbor, had "taken assa-fidity. Miss Hills was beat out. She didn't know how she should get through the forenoon. Perhaps if Miss Julia'd sit with the Judge while Miss Hills got a wink o' sleep!"

So the woman led her into the sick-room, where his sister was alone with him. Miss Hills gave her a kindly hand-touch and then beckoned her to the door, where they could talk. "You're real thoughtful," said she. "If I could only get a mite of a nap! Doctor says he may last the day out."

"I'll be glad to stay," said Julia quietly. She dared not look them in the face. The robust joy of her own soul might speak aloud. "I haven't got a thing in the world to do. I'll call you if there's any need."

And, incredibly beautiful, marvellous beyond all fancy, she was left with her own old love and the fruition of the years. There was nothing to do for him save to be his guard of honor to the gate, where he would meet that potentate known only as a name. Now it seemed futile even to wet his lips. No life was left for cherishing: only the likeness of life. Once his eyelids quivered and lifted slightly, too weak to close. Then she thought how dark it must be to him, with the death-dusk gathering also. They had curtained the windows

to a decent gloom, and silently she undid their work and let in all the light of day. A gush of the singing of birds came also. Through that presaging dark the same notes had been sounding with a shadowy pain. Now they were full and sweet, like bells unmuffled. She took her place again and closed her fingers softly about his, knowing how the dying hand loves to cling, long as it can, to some palm of earth. Once the neighbor came in and looked wonderingly at the flooding light.

"He wants it so," murmured Julia.

"I don't believe he's conscious," began the woman, but Julia slipped her hand from that poor chilling one and drew the intruder with her from the room.

"Don't you say a word for him to notice," she commanded with dignity. "We think they can't hear. How do we know what they hear? Don't you wake anybody up, either. I could sit there till night."

But the old man did not linger. His face grew thin, as if mortality went the way of visible dissolution. It took on an ineffable austerity. His breaths were baby breaths, a whisper in the throat. Now Julia laid her cheek beside his on the pillow, listening and loving. They breathed there together, she in an ecstasy living the life of two, and he—perhaps his spirit waked unseen beside her. The old clock in the corner rang its eleven strokes, and her heart quickened. It seemed a challenge of time, calling him forth again to earthly hours and days. "Come now," it cried, "or else forever after—"

The last stroke trembled like a thread of sound. The room was very still. Julia knew without assurance that the last act—so great and yet so simple—was accomplished. The knowledge brought a terror and delight: it seemed as if, in her close companionship, she too, for a moment, had touched that great unchartered freedom of the soul. She lifted her head and looked. He had been motionless before, but now the silence cried aloud of its own potency. It—that ineffable and august being outweighing earth and seas—had withdrawn, and she was alone. She kissed him on the forehead and closed the half-shut lids, and there, in a moment, they found her.

"He's just gone," she said sweetly, smiling at them, "just gone." Then in the strange confusion attending such departures she slipped away to the kitchen and made herself so useful there that she could ill be spared.

So she stayed for the two nights before the funeral, and did all sorts of services, things that made her smile: though not in the least bitterly now, for she was a contented woman, and the time of her own pilgrimage seemed very short. She made cake, to be eaten at the great funeral supper. She washed pyramids of dishes, for relatives

came from the towns about and there was solemn feasting. And in the silence of the night she slipped into the dark room while the watchers drank their tea, and touched the dead man's hair and murmured to him.

Judge Hills was a person of consequence, and on the third day men and women in their sober clothes came driving in from all the county round. Julia, standing at the kitchen window, regarded the carriages in a fine worldly satisfaction, and held her head high over his futile triumph. She had no mourning garments, but she brushed her little worn dress and made herself "as neat as wax." Dust never clung to her, said the country folk, seeing her on her tramps; she had not forgotten the observances of gentlehood because she lacked the soft security of place. But to-day she tied over her bonnet the great figured veil wrought by her mother years and years ago, and always packed with her own travelling gear. That was all she could do to make herself unlike the Julia of the working world.

At two o'clock the mourners assembled in the great parlor about the man they came to honor. Neighbors and friends were in the sitting-room, and a line of carriages marked out the road imposingly. Almost on the stroke came Elder Kent, himself no less dignified than some who bore the guinea's stamp. Julia, from her window, saw him and understood. Her heart beat a welcome of such spontaneous love as it had never known in her unwilling servitude. She went forward through the hall to meet him, and he smiled upon her and took her hand. Then the other minister, the settled one, began: "Man that is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble," and the two old people stood there in the sunlight clasping hands like children, not of the world about them, yet simple and unabashed. When the neighbors and friends went tiptoeing through, to look once more upon the dead, the two still stood there, cheerful both as the sunshine over them. The halting procession moved along the path, a sluggish stream; then, the brother still holding his sister's hand, they walked along behind it to the grave. It had been made in the little family lot where all the Hills lay buried; and Julia looked about her with a strange and beautiful sense of having come home. "I am the resurrection and the life," read the preacher, and she felt as if that moment might always last. The benediction came, and silence. Now there would be the sound of clods upon a coffin.

"Let's go," she whispered, and the Elder drew her out of the yard and into the pasture trail. Half way she said wonderingly, "I don't seem to have any strength!" but when he asked if she would rest, she shook her head and smiled at him.

The house was empty when they got there, for Susan and Aunt Lindy had gone to the funeral, and Nancy was lying out in the field

alone. Julia climbed to her little room and the Elder followed her. He tried to take off her bonnet, and got the strings into a hard knot. Julia laughed a little at that and untied them. Then she lay down, and he brought a quilt from the closet. It was a hot summer day, but anxious intelligence taught him no other form of ministry. Julia let him spread it to her chin, and waited till he had gone softly down the stairs before she threw it off. Then she lay thinking, in great weariness of body, but with her happy vision fixed upon the splendor of the soul. She knew she had passed through her great trial unscathed. Not even the strength of her body was really sapped by these nights of vigil and days of bitter retrospect. Once she had given up, foolishly, wastefully perhaps; but God had not let her suffer that last and keenest pang of withdrawing her beloved in her absence. Her life had blossomed, after all.

The Elder, down on the porch, thinking, thinking, with his ears pricked to hear a sound from her, was tasting too the sweetness in a bitter rind. He longed to go back and whisper his new comfort in her ear, telling her grief had no meaning save as a heavenly medicine. Yet some dissuading wisdom held him still. At his heart he envied her because she suffered universal pain. These were the simple human pangs and glories of the soul, at this one halting-place upon an infinite way—and they were good. They brought her nearer other men by kinship only than he could ever be through prayer and prophecy. Now, almost at the end of life, he saw the face of nature as it shows the face of God, and set dull working days beside eternal Sabbaths to the infinite enrichment of them both. He began dimly to suspect what loss may lie in foregoing mortal blessedness even for a loftier joy. Yet since we must tread the way marked out for us, his nature returned upon its old, old track, and he murmured to himself, as he had so long, "My soul hungers and thirsts after the living God." God! was He the unattainable? how should He be attained?

X.

THE Pillcott camp-meeting had gone tumultuously on until the fifth day and the last. All the world turned out from Cumnor, Ryde, and King's-End, and there had been great harvesting of souls. Elder Kent, instead of mounting the rude platform as he used to do, stayed humbly among the impenitent, and Luke stayed with him. It seemed to the preacher as if he had a child under his charge, and, with some intuition of Luke's dependence on him, he dared not ignore it, lest the outcast slip away discouraged and defer his soul's salvation. For though the old man preached no longer as these, his chosen people of other years, were bound to preach, he looked upon them with a wistful faith. They had no medicine for him, but they had, he knew,

for many, and Luke might be among them. The smoking flax must not be quenched. He would utter his word in season, but meantime others should say theirs. He had a pathetic care of Julia, too. She was busy everywhere. People went to her for all sorts of things, from coffee-making to the loan of a pin. In her brief idleness she sat within the shade, far from the sound of prayer, a look of sweet absorption on her face. At such times the Elder would seek her out and ask wistfully,—

“You feeling pretty well?”

She always smiled at him and answered, “Real well. I’m real contented too.”

These were hot days, and the woods exhaled a resinous sweetness suffocating in the nostrils. Certain of the more distant towns had put up tents and carried on a primitive camping. Scattered through the clearing at the south were smaller tents, erected by families, and day by day those who lived near enough came with their luncheon baskets and “hitched hosses” at a distance. The ground itself lay like a natural amphitheatre. There the rude seats had been built and, fronting them, the platform for exhorters. On this last day the air was charged with a disturbance even more palpable than that of nature. Nerves had been wofully strained in this annual onslaught upon sin. Renewed souls were exhausted from the force of their own battling, and even the saved of a previous conversion grew fractious under the necessity of “being religious” the while they packed in preparation for going home.

Luke, lingering near the Cumnor tent, waiting for the Elder to leave a band of black-coated colleagues, frowned at the voices of women floating out upon the air. He caught his own name and a fragment of his own story, elementary as the record of the world must ever be when it spells the alphabet of hearts.

“Big Joan won’t tell how ’twas nor Sally herself. As for Obed, you can’t git it out o’ him. But all is, he gin the baby up because she was teethin’ an’ he thought her grandmother could do for her. An’ here he is. On the anxious seat last night. Didn’t you see him? They kep’ at him till nigh twelve o’clock, an’ he never yipped.”

“Well, how is the baby?”

“Oh, the baby’s all right! Teeth come terribly early, an’ she’s been real sick; but Mis’ Horner’s as pleased as a cat with two tails. Now think o’ Sally Horner herself, ’round the house ag’in as large as life an’ twice as nippin’! Big Joan’ll have to carry less sail.”

“Well, I guess she won’t. Nothin’ less’n an earthquake’ll shake up Joan.”

“I dunno. Sally’s a whole team, on’y git her started. Think of all that time she’s laid there! I guess she’ll be madder’n a hornet

when she comes to add it up. All the doctors' trade she's took, too! My soul, if I'd thought this cheese wouldn't ha' been eat, I never'd ha' brought it."

Then the Elder appeared, and Luke turned with him into a balmy path leading to a spring they both knew well. Luke took off his hat and pushed the hair back from his forehead. His face was ivory pale, and his eyes kept a suspicious outlook upon life. "I don't care a damn what becomes of me," he said.

"God cares," returned the Elder with simplicity.

"God! Who is He?"

"I don't know."

"What's all this about Jesus Christ? Do you believe it?"

"Oh, yes, I believe."

"You believe you'll go to hell if you don't say you believe?"

"I believe I shall be in hell always, till I turn my face towards God."

"How?"

"Keep saying to Him, 'Make me do what You want me to do.'"

They sat down by the spring, and Luke took the cocoanut dipper and drank deep draughts. He looked up at the burning sky. Great piles of thunder-heads filled the west, and their premonition beset the air. He hated the world and the way it was made. "I'm in hell now," said he.

A shadow of pain crossed the Elder's face. He longed for the exquisite agony of human loss, that he might also guess where the root of healing grew. Was it in the one Christ alone? Was it not in every soul who chooses to tread the sacred way of pain?

"I guess you are in hell," he said. "But you won't be there a minute longer than God wants you should. I wouldn't pray to come out. I should pray God to tell me what He wants me to do while I'm there."

Luke rolled over, his face in the grass, lying not abased but suppliant before the One Who had not yet made his vision clear. Sometimes, an old habit of his misery, he clutched the grass in his hand, and the odor of pennyroyal tinged the air. Once the Elder would have lifted his own voice in ardent supplication; now, so sacred had the travail of souls grown to him, that he dared not stir the waters by a word. Their vigil lasted until the shadows lengthened, and Luke questioned him again. "Are you ever afraid?"

"Yes," he answered, lifting his face to heaven and speaking solemnly, "I'm afraid of God."

"Ain't you ashamed of it? after all this rubbish about love?"

"It's all one. He shows you the beauty of holiness. He gives you the fear of darkening its face by sin. But it's all one."

Luke buried his face deeper in the grass and perhaps slept a little. But when they rose he seemed somehow altered, as if his fetters had fallen away. No new spirit can help showing its face, veil it as we will by reserve or diffidence. A little more humility, a vowed obedience, and we are changed.

That late afternoon Martin, whose mind was not on prayer-meetings, met Alla in the entry as she went upstairs. Her eyes had been wet all day, without his noticing. Now, therefore, they were reddened anew by artifice.

"Hullo!" said he, and would have passed her, but she stretched a detaining hand.

"It won't be 'hullo' much longer," said she. "Your mother's told me she's going to clean house, and she wants my room—to-morrow." Her eyes implored him, also her grieving tone. Had he influence in his own house? they asked. Would he give her leave to stay?

"Cleaning!" said Martin, betraying his surprise. "In the middle of summer?"

"She says so."

Mrs. Jeffries came out from the sitting-room, her trumpet ready. She fixed it to her ear and lifted the mouthpiece insinuatingly towards Martin. "Did you holler?" she asked blandly. "Was you wantin' to speak to me?"

Martin looked her in the eye with a gaze compact of admiration. He shook his head. "Ride over to camp-meeting with me to-night," said he in a hasty aside to Alla. "It's my last chance." The words escaped him. They were meant for his own mind and not for hers; but they covered her with a radiance of hope fulfilled. Even the jealous old woman saw that and stepped between.

"What did you say, Martin?" she asked, still with a deceptive allurements.

"Half-past five," said Martin under his breath, "that'll be early enough."

Alla ran upstairs, light of foot under the burden of her happiness, and Martin put his lips to the trumpet. "Mother," said he approvingly, "you're the devil and all."

Mrs. Jeffries nodded in well satisfied commendation of so just a sentiment. "I ain't a fool by any manner o' means," she announced modestly. "She's goin'. She tell ye?"

"Yes. Said you'd got to have her room."

"It's better'n her company," chuckled the old lady, looking at him knowingly, with her head on one side. "Then you turn over a new leaf. You lay aside your profligate ways an' go over an' ask Nancy Eliot to marry ye. As good a girl as ever stepped, an' here you be

carryin' on like a crazed creatur'. I'd like to know what your father'd say!" She withdrew the trumpet and went composedly about her work, leaving him to muse over the unexplored in her difficult moods.

He went out-of-doors, smiling to himself and lifting his brows over the complications of the afternoon. For he knew he was watched. The indomitable old lady would keep her eye on him until Alla should be safely gone. She was even capable of climbing into the wagon, accoutred as she was, and driving with them to camp-meeting, a righteous marplot. So Martin kept out of the way. At five he had a "cold bite" in the pantry, and then disappeared into his own room, where he shaved. By and by, he slipped out to the barn, groomed Black Fancy, and harnessed her ready for the carriage. His mother was picking up chips when he strode past her, with a nod and smile meaning there was merry war between them. Mrs. Jeffries ignored the nod; she shook her head, and continued to shake it long after she had seen him lounge out into the road and set off in the direction of the new house. But Martin only walked until the fringed roadside hid him from view; then he leaped the wall and came home over the field. His mother was not visible; he judged, and rightly, that she had gone to put on her sacred afternoon cap and apron. So he tapped at Alla's door.

"Go out and wait in the barn when you're ready," he told her. "Fancy's pretty high this afternoon. I'd rather you'd get in there."

She called her assent eagerly, understanding what he failed to explain. It was not Fancy who was high.

When Martin, in the splendor of his best clothes, went into the barn, Alla was there, trembling and pretty. It took only an instant to back Fancy into the shafts, put the girl into the buggy, and, opening the great doors, leap in beside her. They were driving swiftly out of the yard, grazing a short curve, when the expected happened. Mrs. Jeffries, bonnet in hand, appeared on the steps and called shrilly after them: "Martin, Martin, you stop! You take me too!"

Martin drove on without turning his head. Alla gave a little nervous laugh, but when she looked at him his face was immovably set, and she wondered if he could have heard. For the first mile he said nothing, and she was too happy to talk. He had taken her side, said feminine instinct. She had been forbidden the house, but it made no difference. The new one was almost ready. A word to-day and it would be settled. She was already his, and he had only to speak to make her so indeed.

"We'll get supper up in the Cumnor tent," he said at last. "They'll have buns and truck."

"I don't care," said Alla, wishing she dared nestle closer to him but always repelled by that strange aloofness. "I don't care if I never

eat." She laughed again in a wild exhilaration. She was like a shepherd lass who had heard all her life of the mountain god; and lo! a summer day and the god was here beside her. Why should he seek her, unless he wanted her? Desire and the full cup were on their way to meet.

Martin, too, was under the spell of a nervous tension. He thought with lightning speed, and tried vainly to formulate what he had to do. It must come as it would. All he could be sure of was that he must see her absolutely alone before she went away; so far, he was succeeding.

When they drove into the grounds the turmoil of supper was going on, and Alla, under the focus of eyes, carried herself like a village queen. She knew what they were thinking. She could almost echo those unheard voices. Martin Jeffries had got through with that wild-goose chase after Nancy Eliot, she heard them say, and taken up with Alla Mixon. Good for him! She felt already like a bride, and stood demurely by as he fastened the horse. Then she walked beside him to the tent and talked soberly with matrons while they ate their supper. When the services began—early that night, because there must be time for a final winnowing of chaff and wheat—she and Martin sat down in the outer row of seats.

"We can slip away if we want to," he whispered her, and she nodded with burning cheeks. She thought he would propose going soon, perhaps by the Old Gristmill Road. The moon would be up, and in that silvered seclusion they could talk and talk. She almost felt his lips upon hers, and sighed rapturously.

The meeting began, and the great exhorter called upon Christians to rise and then upon the sinners. At each summons Alla gave a frightened look at Martin, but seeing him unstirred, she sank back half-heartedly relieved. The exhorter was a giant, of a tremendous presence. His black hair swept back from his forehead, his eyes burned in the lantern light, and his voice rang superbly through the echoing wood.

"Come to the mercy seat!" he chanted. "Come! Come! Every one! Every one! Young men and maidens, come, or it will be too late! too late!"

Tremulous forms rose in the darkness and stole down to the anxious seat. Sobs were in the air, and at every movement the exhorter cried, "Glory to God! Glory to God!"

Elder Kent, standing by the platform with Luke, like a darker shadow, had folded his arms and lifted a peaceful face to heaven. But when these cries arose he too murmured adoringly, "Glory to God!"

The night was suffocatingly still. Women waved their palm-leaf

fans, and even in that outer air two or three were led, faint and breathless, to the spring. There was a rumbling of thunder from the west, and slow, rosy flashes of lightning lit the whole heaven, disclosing fear, repentance, and a vague uneasiness on scores of upturned faces. Even with Martin, Alla was afraid. She could hardly breathe. Little sobs arose in her throat, and she choked them, fearing to repel him. The lightning came more regularly now, every flash disclosing the blackness of the cloud-pall overhead. Underneath the exhorter's frenzy there was a murmur of secular talk. Men consulted together and wondered whether it would be well to wait till the storm broke or to be on the homeward way. Some of them drew their womenfolk aside, and there was a noise of rustling skirts and a sound of packing from the tents. The commonplace tumult surged about Alla like a premonitory warning. With these words of death and judgment in her ear, it seemed like the end of the world; her only stay was Martin, and he made no move to still her tremors.

"I guess we'd better get out of this," he said at last, when the flashes gave place to a zigzag streak and a nearer peal. "What do you say?"

"Oh, let's go home!" she cried, beside herself. "I'm afraid—the thunder and all these folks."

She took his arm and hurried with him to the tree where Fancy had been tethered. The horse whinnied gladly and laid her nose to Martin's shoulder. Her eyes showed her feelings; her ears were flat. She was young, and she too hated thunder. They drove cautiously over the rough wood-road, and then out on the highway at a quickened pace. Fancy knew it all. The storm was coming, and she was to let it chase and never overtake her. Martin, driving carefully, his eyes on the road and every sense alert, had his mind on the quest for which he had come. The shower might balk him.

"Alla," said he, "see here! You've got to tell me something."

The girl's fears settled themselves like magic. The great moment of her life had come. She smiled blissfully into the storm.

"Yes," said she, her voice all sweetness.

A brighter gleam struck them full in the face, and Fancy rose on her hind legs and bolted. Martin set his hands to the reins and pulled her into her swift, considered trot. He spoke between clenched teeth, managing, as he was, both horse and woman.

"When you borrowed my 'Pilgrim's Progress,' what did you do with that pressed flower in it?"

Thrown from her base of expectation, she thought him mad, or even she herself, for having heard him wrongly. It seemed a part of the storm. Anything was possible on a night like this.

"I never——" she began, but he interrupted her.

"You went into my room and took down my 'Pilgrim's Progress.' You've got the paper the flower was in. Where is the flower?"

The storm was on them with announcing splashes, and then the driving volley of the rain. The thunder broke in cracks; the lightning blinded them. Martin gave up argument, for the horse was forgetting she had a master, and the next moment might see them all in the ditch. With a sharp turn that wrung a little cry from Alla he dipped into a yard and drove up to a barn, where he called and then waited for some one to come.

Old Uncle Simeon Beane potted out of the house with a lantern and began struggling with the door. "I've expected some on ye for the last half an hour," he panted. "I says to her, some o' them camp-meetin' folks'll be sure to drive in. Gosh! ain't that a high hoss!"

Fancy stood on her hind legs again and pawed at the barn.

"I'd give you a hand, only I don't like to leave her," said Martin; but the old man had at last unlatched the door, and the wind swung it open.

They drove in, and the horse stood dripping and quivering, her nostrils big with fright. Alla had longed for shelter, but these hay-lined walls presaged a more terrible doom. If she must be struck, it might better be in the open. But if Martin would only be kind to her—she choked a little, and felt her fear. Old Simeon, clinging for dear life to the barn-door, had shut and hooked it. He was a thin shaving of a man, with a tuft of beard and a memory of eyes. They seemed to have withdrawn into their sockets, to keep the keener watch. He lifted his lantern and gazed admiringly at Fancy.

"That's a pretty fair hoss," he remarked; but upon the heels of his speech came flash and roar, and he fell into the limpness of the summoned. "God sakes!" he cried, "let's not have no worldly talk. We're in the power of the Almighty." He withdrew into the tie-up, where darkness invited him, leaving the lantern behind, and began a sepulchral counting. Martin stepped down and stood by Fancy's head.

"What's that old pirate counting for?" he asked Alla, and she returned, shuddering,—

"To tell whether the thunder gets farther off. Gran'ther used to."

Martin stroked the horse's neck and seemed to be thinking. Alla could not look at him. Suddenly she was afraid of him, more, even, than of the storm. He was so terribly remote. The barn had been packed with new hay, some of it brought in that afternoon; it was from the lowland and thick with spearmint. The air reeked with the fragrance. She hated it because it seemed a part of this hideous time. Martin left the horse and came nearer. His gaze compelled hers. "Alla," he said, "where's that flower, that ladies'-delight?"

Her lips whitened a little, but she did not answer. Invention failed her, and she could not.

"Seven—eight—nine," came weirdly from the darkness, and with the peal, began again at one.

"You might as well tell me," said Martin. "You see I know the whole story. You took down my 'Pilgrim's Progress.' You found a folded paper in it, and the paper had a flower pressing. I know, because that paper was the note you told Nancy Eliot she'd got to pay."

Alla looked at him fascinated; this was not the way discovery should come. He was not blaming her about the note; he only talked of flowers.

"Did you throw the flower away?" asked Martin.

"I guess I—lost it," she answered almost inaudibly.

He smiled, and catching a flash of that concession, she breathed again.

"That's all right," he said. "So the flower was there. And the paper 'twas in was the note."

She was constrained to answer "Yes."

He came a little nearer and laid his hand upon the wheel. "Alla," said he, "have you made way with that other note?"

In spite of herself, she shook her head. His masterful spirit and the terrors of the world without were both constraining her.

"Then," said Martin, still gently, "I'll tell you what you've got to do. You've got to show me both notes together, and let me tell you how to keep out of Pillcott Jail. It won't help you to destroy either one now. You've got to let me manage it."

Her teeth were chattering, and she cowered into her shawl. Was he a malignant spirit or was he kind? Old Simeon appeared from the shadow moderately cheerful, for the thunder was rumbling away, and the last flashes had scarcely penetrated his retreat.

"About that hoss, now," he began, but Martin had opened the door and was backing out, calling, as he took his place: "Much obliged! Do the same for you, come Judgment Day!"

Fancy's hoofs went beating down the muddy road, and the old man chuckled to himself as he latched the door and went in to bed.

Martin drove swiftly and without a word. When they entered the yard the moon was shining, and the clouds, withdrawing, left the world all light. Mrs. Jeffries's lamp was burning, and Martin knew she was watching for him to drive into the barn. He stopped at the gate, and going back to the carriage held out his hands. Alla stepped down trembling and stood beside him on the soaking grass. She was sick with the dread of him and her own accomplished deed.

"Go into the house," said Martin steadily, "and get both notes."

Bring 'em out into the barn. Come to the cow-house door. I'll be there. I'll fix it for you, Alla. It's that or jail."

Still she did not know whether he was kind or only threatening her to her own betrayal. No matter: languor fell upon her, and she went weakly up the path. At the steps she heard him coming also. Silently he pushed open the door and groped his way behind her up the stairs. In his own room he lighted a candle and brought it in, to find her trying, with shaking hands, to take off her wet shawl. He helped her gently, and she looked up at him with an imploring patience.

"Come, Alla," said he, "get the notes."

"There's only one," she faltered weakly.

"Oh, yes! there's two, at present. If there isn't, you've destroyed the old one, and that means jail. Find the notes."

She opened the bureau drawer and took out her father's long wallet. It was stuffed with papers. Defiantly she selected one and gave it to him. "That's all there is," she said sullenly, combating her fear.

A step sounded in the sitting-room below; then an intermittent whirring told that Mrs. Jeffries was winding up the clock.

"There's mother," said Martin. "Out with the light. This has got to be finished, now we've begun."

He blew out the candle, and they stood silent while Mrs. Jeffries came half way up the stairs, sniffing at the smoke. Then they heard her retreat to the kitchen, and Martin knew she had gone for a light. He threw up the window, tossed out the tell-tale candle, and whispered to Alla,—

"Come, you've got to talk with me."

He grasped her wrist, and drew her down the stairs, out over the wet grass to the barn. She would have resisted him, save for her hopeless ignorance of his desires towards her. Was he working for Nancy? She would have held to her point, defying him and the law. Was he working for her? She could deny him nothing. He led her down to the middle door and left her there in darkness while he lighted the lantern. She could hear the cows chewing their cuds in the yard without, and the drip, drip of water from the eaves. She hated the country now, as she had been used to hate it in the old days, before she went away and fell in love with the glitter of city streets. Martin came towards her with the lantern, illuminating a step before him and carving the shadows into caverns blacker still. His face wore a fictitious sternness because, little as she might know it, he was not yet out of the woods of doubt. He brought forward a keg and turned it over.

"Sit down," he said. "Alla, where's that note?" He had the new one in his pocket. She had seen him put it there.

"You've got it," she said doggedly.

"I've got the copy. Where is the old note with your father's writing on the back?"

She put her head on one side and bridled a little, with a pathetic recurrence to her idea of feminine charm. "I wish you wouldn't plague me so," she pouted. "When I'm sleepy, too!"

"I shall have to be a witness," said Martin inexorably. "When I'm asked, I shall have to own you went into my room, took down my book, and stole this note out of it. The note was one Nancy wrote in the school-house one night to carry up to your father. She thought it didn't look well enough, and so she copied it, and I took this and slipped it into my book to press a flower. I can't tell what you did with the other, but I shall have to prove you stole this. Come, Alla, own up, and it's between you and me so long as we both shall live."

He spoke solemnly, and the words hurt her with their echo of unending troth.

"What do you want to know for?" she asked sharply, from the acuteness of her pain.

Then Martin hedged, and was wholesomely ashamed. "I don't want to think you're a thief!"

Her eyes were upon him, trying to read his mind. He could see her poise and counterpoise, but he never knew how despairingly. The terrible human price at stake for her lay outside his line of vision. He knew she sought him, coquetted with him; but knowing also how shallow she was, he never called that pastime love. Her face whitened. She had decided. On the one hand was certain loss, and on the other a little less despair. She would yield, and then he must reward her. Rising, she put her hand into the inner pocket of her petticoat, brought forth a slip of paper, and held it towards him, looking up at him with anguished eyes. "There!" she said.

Martin took it and turned it from one side to the other. "That's the ticket!" said he gladly. "Twenty, thirty, thirty—there'll be a matter of interest, a few cents." He took out his pocket pen—one he had bought Nancy and she had been too prim to receive—and figured rapidly on the spurious note. "That's how I make it," he said, "to date. That suit you?"

She nodded, waiting for him to thrust aside the hateful business and turn to what concerned themselves. Martin drew out his disreputable wallet, fat with bills, perhaps prepared for this encounter. Selecting one, he laid it in her lap. "Look it over," said he briskly. "That all right? Now put your name here. Easy with the pen. Sometimes it sputters."

Alla wrote unseeingly. Her careless letters straggled down the page. Then she passed him pen and paper with a trembling hand and waited. Martin, smiling, blew upon the signature.

"That's all over," he said cheerfully. "You're all right, Alla. I wouldn't do that kind of thing again, though. If you monkey with business, you'll get left. Now run in and put on dry clothes. I'll hold the lantern."

She looked at him fiercely. "Is that all?" she cried.

"I guess so. We don't want to rake up anything more about it, do we?"

"Is it all?" she repeated, trying to summon a just indignation and conscious only of being cold and lonesome. "Martin Jeffries, is that why you've been going with me?"

Martin had made the mistake of ignoring emotion in her because she ignored it in some one else. Yet human things are not to be dealt with thus, and the unjust soul may awaken, and cry in its turn for justice. But still he thought only of Nancy, and after Nancy, himself. Alla seemed a subordinate character, made to be put aside, now that her part was played.

"Going with you," he repeated honestly: "Bless your soul! Don't get such a bee as that into your bonnet. O Alla, come, be a good girl! Run in now, and get on some dry clothes."

She rose and slipped away into the dark. At the door he thought he heard a sob, and called her name; but though he ran after her, careless of his mother's eyes, she was gone and in her own room. It seemed to him a bad business well over, and he led Black Fancy into the yard and whistled as he unharnessed. His mother set the lamp in the window to throw a track of light, and when he went in she met him at the door. Her face challenged him.

"Martin," said she quite humbly, offering her trumpet, "you ain't up to anything you couldn't let your father know, now be you?"

He was about to put her jeeringly off, according to their mutual habit of play, but suddenly he became aware that it was not tyranny calling from her eyes, but a quivering apprehension. He spoke gently into the tube: "Now, mother, you just treat me once as if I was a white man! I'm as good as you are."

The little old lady sighed. "You ain't got anyways tangled up with that creatur'?" she insisted.

"I just took her to ride. I had to, didn't I, to plague you, after you'd been cross to her? Now, mother, you be a decent old lady, and I'll have Nancy writing her name with a J before Thanksgiving."

Her face softened a little and she smiled, with some return of her general defiance of destiny. "Then let's get to bed," said she, "an' be up time enough to pack off that creatur' up there. She said she'd go by the fust train."

Martin detained her. "Mother, now you act nice to her in the

morning," he pleaded. "I've been as hateful as a hog. She's all out of conceit with me."

In that event, said Mrs. Jeffries' answering glint of smile, amiability might be managed. "I'll have cream-o'-tartar biscuits for breakfast," she promised.

Martin saw her up the stairs to her room, and threw off his wet coat for a dry one. He stayed only to change the contents of the inner pocket and then strode out of the house, shutting the door behind him. He knew Nancy was not at camp-meeting, for Aunt Lindy and Mrs. Eliot were there with the Kanes. It might not be too late to find her. There was no light, but he tried the door and then stepped into the dusky entry, whence he knew his way. "Nancy!" he called softly, with some presentiment.

"O Martin! Martin!" answered a sobbing voice on the heels of his speech. "You there? O Martin, is it you?"

He felt along through the darkness with hands outstretched, and, hearing the catch of her breath, touched the soft shawl about her shoulders. She stood still, her pulsating blood betraying her, and when he drew her into his arms she clung there, and, like a child, curled her head into his coat. He could feel her breath, and his own, hot and fast, met and mingled with it.

"O Nancy, don't speak!" he whispered, "give me your mouth." But while they stood there he guessed how she was yielding, until only his arms upheld her. She seemed pathetically weak for the girl who had so flouted him. Was it she, or another made in her image, yet all sweetness? He did not care. She seemed to him not so much the one he had loved and striven for, as all womankind made to draw the primal man in him eternally. But because she was so weak he put out his hand and found the corner of the sofa where she had been lying, and so guided her to it. They sat down together, his arms again about her. Then she spoke, but with a recklessness new to her pure voice.

"Martin, I can kiss you to-night, for it's the last time—the first and the last. I've committed the unpardonable sin."

He laughed and stroked her cheek. "Good for you, Nancy! Now you can tell 'em what it is."

She only shuddered. "I'm lost," she said quite quietly, but with her teeth chattering. "So it don't make any difference what I do. I know you're going with another girl, but I don't even care for that, so long's you're here this minute."

"Stuff and nonsense! there's no other girl. Because I took Alla Mixon to ride, to get a chance to see her alone and talk about your note! You little fool! you know every drop of blood in me is yours, just as yours belongs to me. If we could have our blood turned into each other's veins, we shouldn't know the difference, should we? You tell."

"No! no!"

But Martin really loved her, for tenderness constrained him to be gentle. He touched her cheek softly and made his voice all kindness: "Tell about it."

"I've committed the unpardonable sin," she repeated monotonously. "I've upset my life every way. Somehow or other, I got cheated out of all the money I worked for and that mother'd ought to have. I wasn't fit to do business. Then I went up there to Luke's and got myself talked about. Aunt Lindy let that out to-day."

"What's the value of their talk?—a last year's bird's nest."

"Did you hear it?"

"Some of it, yes."

"Did you think I was—bad?"

He fancied her eyes darkening in pain.

"I thought exactly what everybody else did! I thought you were a little fool. I didn't like your cutting round over the pastures at night, so I used to follow on, to see you come out right."

"I heard the steps. I thought it was spirits. Was it you?"

"Me. Spirit of a just man made perfect."

"Did you follow me the night I walked up the road with him?"

"Till he tried to kiss you. Then I thought—if you liked it, he might." Some reserve of a pain she had not suspected moved the lightness of his voice, and, jealous for him, she retorted sharply,—

"He didn't kiss me."

"No. I saw you bowl him over. I said, 'She's my Nancy yet. I can trust her.' So I went along home."

A feminine curiosity prompted her to probe him further. "Suppose I had liked him?"

"Then," said Martin, "I should have known I'd got to wait for you till you got over your craze and came back."

"How long?"

"Maybe a year. Maybe—till the sun cools off."

But Nancy shivered back to her grief. "I have committed the unpardonable sin," she repeated.

"That's all right. Just like you, too! You wouldn't be contented with arson or murder; no makeshifts for a girl like you!"

"I promised God to give up everything and preach the gospel. Then I saw you go by to camp-meeting with her. I'd seen you with her before, but to-night I couldn't bear it. I sent word to the Elder that I wouldn't go away with them, and I sat here all the evening and talked to God. I told Him I had just one thing besides mother, and He'd taken it away. I didn't mind the money's going, but you—you—" She clung to him agonized, with a sharp and sudden understanding of what it is to be bereft.

"O my soul and body!" groaned Martin. "When it comes to living on this earth, not one of you women is knee-high to a grasshopper. What do you suppose God cares about your squeaking little back-talk? You just come over to the new house, along in the fall, and wash dishes and cook Johnny-cake, like any other married woman, and be kissed for your pains, and see if God interferes with you. More or less He will. We've got to tough it with the rest. Even squirrels have hard winters. But what do you suppose He put us here for, but to mate and clear up the ground a little, and sow a few grass-seeds, and plant a tree? We ain't—*are not* here to be forever packing to go somewheres else. If God is the kind of a county sheriff you seem to think, He must get terrible tired of seeing folks round with their white robes on, and their harps standing ready tied up in green baize."

"But if I am not lost, where do I get my sense of sin?"

"Sense of sin! sense of fiddlestick! You're tired out. You've kept school, and revamped the universe till you're off your head. King's-End's too bracing, anyway. Father used to say so. That's why we're all more or less lunny. I made up my mind when I used to see you whipping by to school with your eyes starting out of your head that, when we were married, we'd go to the sea every summer and camp out. Yes, ma'am! O Nancy, girl, don't waste this first minute talking about sin. Think how the sage and marjoram will smell when you come out between the rows to call me to dinner, and your skirts brush against 'em. And in the winter, when you have a sore throat, I'll tie it up in pork and petticoats!"

And lo! since he was a man, and the man she loved, all her cares fell away from her. His rude vigor seemed the only real thing on earth; and because the earth belonged to him, it was hers also, and dear to her.

"Could I, do you think," she asked, with a timidity he found adorable,—“could I let myself live along like that? But if I did, Martin, if I did it ever, I should have to pay off that money first, so's mother'd be provided for.”

“Come, rise up, William Reilly,” quoted Martin. “Let's have a light.”

He never forgot that first glimpse of her illumined by the little lamp. Her lips a-quiver over the white teeth, her eyes all sweet and shining, she looked as if she had risen from a bath of happiness. The other prim Nancy had gone. This seemed her younger sister, the child of youth and love, spelling out the first letters of the sweetness of earth. The picture came back to him that night when he lay in his little, dark room, and he knew then that he had it forever. But at the moment when his eyes recorded it, he was not conscious of her looks at all, only that he had something which would please her very much.

He took out the missing note and presented it, with his dancing-school bow.

"There, Miss Nancy," said he. "Compliments of the season."

She took it, first indifferently and then in an unbelieving joy. Her fingers shook. "O Martin!" she cried, "O Martin! you tell me where you got it!"

Martin was, as he owed to himself afterwards, stumped. All the address of man is powerless, he saw, before an inquiring woman. He may do deeds for her; but it is a marvel if he can unriddle how he did them. But his was a blithe and dauntless wit. He took her hands, and the note fluttered down between them, Nancy eying it hard, afraid of further witchery.

"Nancy, dear," said he, "Alla happened to find the first draft you wrote there in the school-house that night. I slipped it into my book to press the flower in. Don't you know I asked you about the flower? Well, you see, I'd lost it; and Alla, she'd borrowed my book, and the paper—sort o' fell out and she found it. And then she came across the other, the right one,—and she was afraid to tell. I knew there was something on her mind, so I took her to ride to get chances to see her and mother not know,—though somehow I never could get anywhere till to-night. She's all broke up about it, Nancy. You won't speak of it? Not to her, not to anybody, ever?" He drew a long breath.

"I guess I won't, if you tell me not to!" She looked at him from that new plane of submission, and her humility went to his head.

He put his hands on her shoulders, though the Kanes' old wagon, with its three loose spokes, had rattled up to the gate, and he knew Aunt Lindy was probably beginning her difficult descent. Martin regarded his girl with eyes so compelling that she felt her first doubt whether she had ever known him in the least. "Nancy! Nancy! what do you suppose is going to happen?"

She shook her head.

"You're going to turn to me the same way you've done everything else. You're going to breathe my breath, think my thoughts, make a little god out of me. I know you. Lord! haven't I got my hands full!"

She looked at him, wistful and still uncomprehending. "Don't I care about you the way you want?" she asked timidly. "Do I set by you too much?"

He could not answer her, and she felt him trembling through his strength. He knew it would be years before she really learned what a man's love is like. Mrs. Eliot's hand was on the latch, and Nancy, with sudden panic, drew him round the other way.

"Go out the back door," she whispered. "Don't let mother see

you. I'll run up to bed and think. I sha'n't sleep. O Martin, I never was happy in my life before!"

It was a wonderful thing to bid her good-by while the cup was still but tasted. He ran back as she was closing the door between them, and she put out her hands, an involuntary welcome.

"Remember," he said, "you're as much my girl to-morrow as you are to-night. When I come, you're going to meet me, and kiss me good-morning before them both."

And Nancy knew in her heart she should.

XI.

At five o'clock in the morning all Sally Horner's doors and windows lay open to the sun. She had now small conceit of her bed; perhaps she even feared it a little lest, lying a moment too long, that old paralysis of the will should fall upon and subdue her.

The cradle stood there in its old place, and the baby slept the sleep of one to whom teething is less than a memory. Sally Horner, on her way to the bedroom to hang up her *déshabillé*, threw the child in passing a glance of that fierce tenderness which betrayed her as she was. A step sounded on the walk and at the door. It neared, with a growing caution, and Luke Evans, his stick and little bundle over his shoulder, came softly in. Sally Horner, from the bedroom, peered round the casing and watched him. He seemed to her now three-quarters man, and not all beast, as her angry spirit had once declared him; and, being on her feet, she felt capable of war, tooth and nail, if he laid hand upon the child. He cast a glance about him, and then made for the one significant spot in the room,—the cradle. There he stood so still that the clock's ticking seemed too loud, and a bee outside the window boomed in gusts of husbandry. A woman would have hung over the cradle yearningly, but Luke stood fixed, his eyes feeding upon the child and greatly desiring what they might not see again. Sally Horner watched him with the glance of one who still holds judgment in abeyance. She had her way. She could afford to live and let live, and, being on her feet, nothing seemed to her so common or unclean as when she read the denunciatory psalms and talked to God about her enemies. A swift impulse, index of her new generosity, urged her to ask him to breakfast; but at that instant he bent over, touched the child's hair with his finger, and without one look behind was gone out of the room as softly as he had entered.

But Luke did not know in the least where he was going, save that he was to meet the Elder and Julia on the Cumnor Road and walk with them into the world.

"You made me," he said in his heart to God. "You've got to see me through. I'll do what I can, but it's your business."

He thought he had thrown off all human ties, never guessing how he had shifted them and welded another link by the way. The old man who had saved him was his neighbor, his friend, the only sign he had of God's great fatherhood. Yet he only felt that the Elder "needed a guardeen," and that some one with time on his hands ought to be by to keep him out of quagmires. So he turned into the cross-road and walked slowly through to the corner where they were to meet. He was far too early, but that was his own choice, that he might creep into the Horner house before the world was stirring. At the corner he climbed the fence, put his bundle under his head, and lay down to wait and muse; and there great comfort came to him.

Late in the forenoon the Elder and Julia were walking the Cumnor Road, bound for their next abiding-place. "I'm afraid Luke'll think we're pretty late," said he, a double question in his look and tone. He was always seeking her now with that pathetic gaze which seemed to ask her whether it was still so blind.

"You just as soon Luke should go?" he continued wistfully. "It won't be any put-out?"

"Not a mite," she answered with more than her old-time cheerfulness. "He'll be some help, and I'd as soon mend for three as two. Besides——" But she did not finish.

Her thought had been, "If I should slip away sometime into that place you are so wise—and so ignorant—about, why then he might be company for you." But she only smiled her new smile of secret knowledge and walked her way contentedly.

Here the Cumnor Road is lined with elms, locked overhead in perfect arches. Under their canopy a horse and chaise came plodding on, the fair, quaint picture of an older day. Dolly, the horse, trod decorously, and Miss Hills sat upright behind her. Julia and the Elder, in their weedy footpath, walked straight on without a glance until Miss Hills drew up, an operation of some moment, and relaxed her pose to beckon. "Miss Kent," she called, with a ceremony King's-End had never used, "I should be pleased to give you a lift. I'd ask your brother, but I should like to see you alone. We'll go slow, and he can overtake us. Dolly is not so smart as some."

Julia shook her head. "I'm much obliged," she said, in a voice enriched by certain sweet and tremulous notes of late. "I'm much obliged, but I like to walk. We've set out for good now."

"I should deem it a favor—though not to put you out. But we can speak right here, and I should be obliged if what we say need go no further."

The Elder walked on a few paces and sat down on a ledge, where he waited, musing.

"I caught sight of you going by," continued Miss Hills, "and I

thought first I'd have them call you in. But Dolly was all harnessed, and I concluded that was best. I brought this with me." She drew a folded paper from her reticule and looked upon it seriously. "We have been going over my brother's papers, and I found this. Nobody knows about it but me. He didn't leave a will, but he made some notes for one. This is the paper where he mentioned you."

Julia put down her little parcel, because it seemed too heavy. She nodded again, having no breath for speech.

"He meant," continued the old gentlewoman with dignity, "to leave you a sum of money and the right of a home on the place. I desire to say that although the will was never made, I shall carry out my brother's wishes as I think he meant."

Julia reached forth her shaking hand. "Should you just as soon give me that paper," she panted, her old face alive. "Is it his own writing? Should you just as soon?"

Miss Hills sat looking at her from behind her veil of fine, mild dignity. She was not altogether pleased by fevers of impatience in so old a woman. From her corner among the delicate usages of life Julia seemed to her uncannily ancient,—one in whom worldly desires should have died long years ago.

"You understand it doesn't give you any hold," she said. "It isn't law. If I carry it out, it will be by my own free will."

"Oh, I know that," said Julia radiantly. "I don't want the money—you're real good, Miss Hills!—nor a home. That's all past and gone. But the paper—you just give me that, and I'll be contented."

The other woman passed it to her wonderingly. "I never knew he was much interested in religion, but I presume your life and your brother's made a great impression on him," she went on. "And being as your brother hasn't practical ways—" There she stopped, aware of being unheard. Julia was regarding the careless notes with an absorbed and tender look, like one suddenly possessed of treasure and not yet able to compute its magnitude. Then she looked up, smiling, and the smile turned her from a dry old woman into a spirit which has incommunicable secrets of heaven and earth.

"I'll keep this," she said. "Yes, Miss Hills, I've got to keep it. You never'll be called on to pay anything; but you've given me now all you could, and more. Good-by, Miss Hills. You're real kind." She walked away, looking back and waving her hand fantastically.

Miss Hills sat there in the chaise and watched her, wondering. She was not an imaginative woman, and Julia Kent seemed to her even more different from other folk than she had thought her: yet not more so, perhaps, than any one who lives a gypsy life, devoid of distaff knowledge. So, meditating decorously upon differences, heaven ordained, she turned old Dolly about and drove back to see to the cleaning of the Judge's room.

The Elder rose as Julia neared him; she was walking fast, perhaps afraid of being recalled for further speech. Her face shone upon him so that he could only repeat, "Why, Julia!" and again, "Why, Julia!"

She had slipped her love-letter into her pocket. "That's a real good woman," she said, "real good! But I can't ride, can I? I don't want anything, do I, but living just as we've always lived?" She laughed excitedly, and yet happily, too.

The beat of hoofs echoed upon the road: Black Fancy at her best. She had wakened Luke, drowsing behind the wall, and flashed into the distance before he knew who summoned. Martin was driving, and by him sat his Nancy, all life and eagerness. When she saw the brother and sister she bent forward, smiling at them. There was a history in her look: deprecation of their blame at being forsaken, sorrow over their starving life, and, above all, a buoyant justification of her choice. "Here he is!" said her triumphant air. "Here are we both together. That is all."

In the instant of their whirling by, Julia laid a hand upon her brother's arm. "O John!" she cried, laughing in little gusts, though the tears lay on her withered cheek, "look at them! look! look! They're young and strong—and it's summer time!"

But after all, she knew Nancy was no richer than she: only it was a different season of the year.



HIS EXCUSE

BY JOHN K. MITCHELL, M.D.

I CANNOT reach the Muse's seat,—
 Whene'er I strike the strings
 The thought of thee, divinely sweet,
 Some spell upon them flings.

My words are lost, are all unfit,
 The music rings untrue;
 Unworthy thoughts and missing wit!
 Lost Helicon, adieu!

The Muse demands a worship whole,
 Unshared, a virgin vow.
 How can I do her service sole
 At thy dear shrine who bow?

Henceforth the singer and the song,
 Music and life and art,
 All with this single purpose strong,—
 To find—to keep—thy heart!

THE EVENT OF MAY 28, 1900

By *Julia MacNair Wright*



MAY 28, A.D. 1900, will call the astronomical world to witness a solar eclipse of totality. Apart from the high-priests of astronomy, the laic public may know a little and admire more at such a season, for however often eclipses occur, they can never fall into the category of the commonplace.

The highest number possible in one year is seven, the lowest two. When the maximum number is reached, five will be eclipses of the sun; if there is but the minimum of instances, both will be solar. The usual annual allowance is four, yet few and far-distant are the golden opportunities of viewing an eclipse of totality from favorable situations.

An eclipse of the sun must always occur when the moon is "new," because then only does she move between the earth and the sun, casting her shadow upon the greater globe.

Why then do we not have an eclipse each month?

Simply because the plane, that is, the line lying level to the centre of the moon as she travels on her orbit, is tilted about five degrees from the ecliptic, and so in her orbital trip the moon may be above or below the place where she could hide the sun from us. In this fortunate May, 1900, she is exactly where a total hiding is possible.

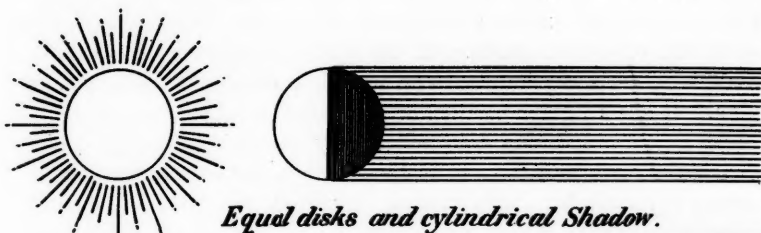
The *ecliptic* is a vast, imaginary, sun-centred circle drawn in space, every part of which lies level to the centre of the sun. Fancy a sun floating half immersed in water; the water surface will then be the much-mentioned "plane of the ecliptic."

An eclipse of the sun comes on from the westward. Why? The earth rolls eastward along her annual path. Some of us can remember this best from our Tennyson:

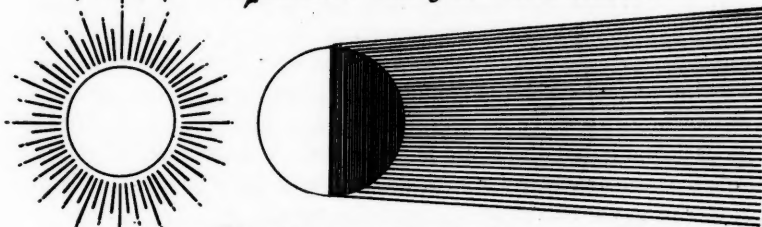
"Move eastward, happy earth, and leave
Yon orange sunset waning slow:
From fringes of the faded eve,
O happy planet, eastward go."

This eastward motion of the earth it is which gives an apparent westward progress to the sun. When we are on a moving train, going east-

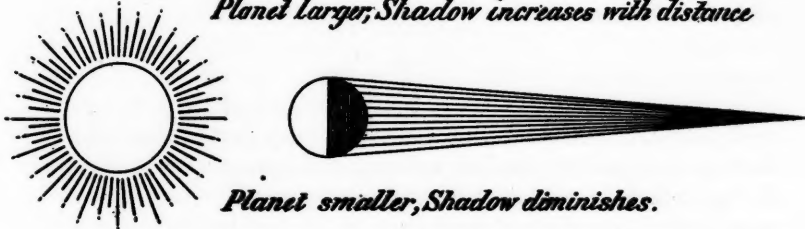
ward, all the trees and other fixed objects seem to fly westward as we pass them. The moon moves eastward with the earth, but the shadow of the moving moon, cast on the moving earth, traverses the earth's surface from west to east, and so any eclipse of the sun by the moon will be visible earlier in the west than the east. We, north of the equinoctial, must view—mentally, at least—celestial objects with our faces southward. Locating in this way the sun, moon, and earth, and remembering the direction of the real motion of the two planets, we shall see that a solar eclipse must be first visible in or proceed from the west, and a lunar one from the east.



Equal disks and cylindrical Shadow.



Planet larger, Shadow increases with distance



Planet smaller, Shadow diminishes.

An eclipse of the sun will be total if the moon is so placed in regard to the earth that her disk is apparently as large as that of the sun.

The beginning of the story of an eclipse lies in the story of a shadow. Every opaque body, small or large, casts its shadow. The form and size of the shadows depend on comparative size and relative distance of the solid bodies. The nearer the two bodies are together, the shorter the shadow will be. The planets are all opaque bodies which give no light, but merely receive and reflect sunlight. If a planet were exactly as large as the sun, its shadow would fall into space in the form of a

great cylinder. Of course, this shadow would be behind the planet, not sunward, as the planet has no light to give, and so none for the sun to obstruct, and it is obstruction of light which causes shadow.

If a planet is (as all are) smaller than the sun, its shadow falls behind itself in the form of a great cone, the cone being longer the farther the planet lies from the sun. All planet shadows smite cone-shaped upon space.

If a planet greater than the sun wheeled into position, its shadow would be an inverted cone, the apex would lie nearest the planet, and the great cone would expand into illimitable distances.

The length of the moon's cone of shadow averages two hundred and thirty-nine thousand miles, according to the moon's distances from the sun, which, of course, varies. At the earth the width of the moon's cone of shadow is one hundred and seventy miles in its dark part, or umbra. It has a lighter portion, or penumbra, fringing its edges.

The moon, wandering fair and stately through the skies, glides between the earth and the sun and casts upon the earth a shadow by shutting out sunlight. This shadow, or eclipse, may be of three sorts. It may be a partial darkening, shading only a part of the royal face, because the moon may cross only a part of the sun's disk. It may be an annular or ring eclipse, because the moon may lie in such a position that a rim, or golden ring, of sun disk may show all about the dark ball of the moon. It may be an eclipse of totality, where, for a few brief, precious instants, all the sun-orb is hidden. This manner of eclipse affords a choice juncture for solar observations, for all about the darkened star of day is an intense corruscation named

THE CORONA.

A thousand blazing, waving, leaping tongues of light, a crown of gold, purple, and crimson fires, pour from every part of the sun's surface. Great banners, torches, and spires of burning flames leap into the spectral night, and the parent of our system most reveals when he most conceals the glory of his face. In this brilliant corona we read the sun's story as told by himself.

As a king's diadem has points and prominences varying its circling band, the sun's corona has eminences of especial height and splendor, called *faculæ*, or torches. The obscurity which to earth-observers surrounds the sun in a total eclipse serves as a foil to these magnificent objects, throwing them into intense relief. Twenty, forty, one hundred thousand, even three hundred and fifty thousand miles high, these spires leap out, a raging storm of burning gas, whirling, bending, waving, changing, like Proteus, to a thousand shapes.

When the shadow of the moon as seen from the earth lies full upon

the sun, ball-like, not flat, then the telescope turned upon the darkened centre of our system discovers, leaping from the heart of infinite darkness, a spectacle of varied and glowing beauty which transcends the effulgence of high noon.

The sun is always surrounded by this rage of spire-like fires, and an ingeniously contrived instrument permits it to be observed without waiting for an eclipse. Even during an eclipse the telescope must be appealed to to bring the corona into mortal view. So sought, and with dense shadows for background, these banners of light can be best seen as they furl and unfurl, sweeping out into gigantic proportions, as if carried by cyclones, or shrinking and falling like flags when the winds have died to rest.

Such is the display of celestial pyrotechnics awaited on May 28, 1900. What preparations have been made for observing it?

THE CONGRESS AT LAKE GENEVA, WISCONSIN.

On September 6, 1899, the Conference of Astronomers and Astrophysicists met at the Yerkes Observatory, on Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. A committee was appointed on the solar eclipse of totality of May 28, to devise the best means for securing coöperation of observers, decide upon the most important classes of observations to be made, the best means of making them, and ascertain the plans of the various eclipse parties.

A consensus of opinion of numerous astronomers made it appear that there will be thorough observations from positions along the line of totality. The search will be especially devoted to careful investigations of the minute structure of the corona. What is called the green line of the corona excites particular interest, and its wave-length possibly will be determined; the amount of heat radiated into space by these prodigious jets of burning gas will be measured, the brightness of the sky at various distances from the sun will be noted, and observations will be made on the shadow bands. Finally, in the twilight of the heavens exploration is to be made in the neighborhood of the sun for that small, long-dreamed-of orb of mystery—the inter-Mercurial planet.

The chief observatories of the United States will send well-equipped parties to the best posts for investigation, and unite from various localities in the above-named lines of research.

WHAT INSTRUMENTS WILL BE USED?

Those marvels of the present age, the great telescopes, superb meridian instruments enriched with numerous beautiful contrivances

for illumination, reading off, and exactitude, will be directed towards the sun for those few breathless moments of totality. Scarcely second in importance among instruments to be used is the spectroscope, by which the material of the coronal flames can be closely studied, even hours beyond the instants of observation; these fires can be analyzed and the nature of sun-stuff examined. The camera is also occupying an eminent place in modern astrophysical research. Strapped to the telescope, the camera seizes and fixes the various changes in celestial objects; it is the absolute truth-teller of the skies. By means of large scale photographs the corona in all its changeful exhibitions will be grasped for future study. The camera will search the space between the sun and Mercury for the little hidden planet of the star-lovers' fancies. Photographs will also be taken of the sun's limb and of its spectrum, in investigating which the three instruments, telescope, spectroscope, and camera, will work together like three skilled craftsmen.

THE STORY TOLD BY THE SPECTROSCOPE.

The application of the spectroscope to astrophysical study was an immense forward step in modern science. It was a very natural question to ask, "Is the material of which our earth is composed peculiar to itself, or do these elements pervade the universe and build up the orbs which roll in space?"

The sun is a glowing, burning globe, infinitely hotter than anything our earth-experiences can help us to imagine. How could we discover of what stuff it is made? Its metals, if it has any, are not only molten, but heated to vapor. How could we seize and analyze them? The key to those secrets was furnished by our own firesides. Watch the fire in the grate—the home-centre. The flames vary in color, and we may learn the why of the parti-colored light. The coal may be charged with sulphur, or we may cast common salt upon it. Each of these substances burns with different colored fire. Burn common salt with spirits of wine, and you get a peculiar yellow light; strontium gives us a magnificent red light; magnesium as it burns dazzles us with a brilliant whiteness. The flame-color from any substance is invariable: magnesium does not burn yellow nor strontium white. The sun is, we know, a burning ball; the color of its flames should tell what material is being consumed. Let us then find out what colors are really in those rays of sunlight which we loosely call colorless or golden or yellow. How shall we divide the ray into the various hues which, blended, form it? A drop of water told us how. It fell before a sunbeam, and lo! it divided the beam into seven glorious hues, and cast them in an arch upon the sky. The prism was found.

We examine sunbeams with a prism, and we know, at least in part, of what the sun is made, for we know what substances must be exhibiting those colors in the burning, whirling ball of gas. The prism casts a colored band or spectrum. We bid it tell the tale that lies behind it, and we find gold, iron, carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, nitrogen, cobalt, zinc, nickel, sodium,—these are names of familiar sound,—up to sixty gases and metals, all known to us upon our earth. Closer analysis found one or two extremely rare substances which we had not recognized on our own planet.

The problem was then “read backward like a Hebrew book.” The earth and its atmosphere were investigated for the missing elements, and they were found—scarce, as in the parent sun. Meteorites are found, analyzed by the chemist, and shown to be chiefly iron—iron dropped to us from external space. The planets are then subjected to spectrum analysis, and tell us that they are made of sun-stuff. Each is a mass of materials familiar and daily handled here on earth. We become adventurous, we seize with the spectroscope the light of the far-off stars; their woof and texture are made known to us; they are kin to sun-stuff. Our sun is a star; all stars are system-centres; these stars shine with varied lights; we have red, yellow, white, blue stars. Blue stars are largely robbed of their light by the absorption of our atmosphere. If we looked at our sun without the veil of our atmosphere before our instruments, he would probably blaze at us as a splendid blue star. The corona of the sun being a wide outblaze of sun matter, the study of the corona by means of the spectroscope will give us immense additions to our knowledge of the elements of our system, and, beyond that, knowledge of universe-building. A flash spectrum, being obtained, can be studied at leisure. As the corona is at its finest during an eclipse of totality, such an event affords us rare opportunity to study the elements which make up worlds. The color bands of the spectrum are divided by dark lines which are always seen between the stripes of strong color. These lines make a marvellous network over the spectrum, and give an effect found nowhere else. What do these lines mean? Their significance may not yet be fully reached, and they may have tales still to tell us about sun-structure. The corona itself, although one assumes to explain it, is nevertheless full of mysteries, and there are numerous yet unanswered questions asked concerning it. For example, it shows a disposition to take a quadrilateral shape, like an irregularly four-cornered star. Why? Who knows? What is the corona’s real nature? Who can tell? He can, who can also tell of what Saturn’s glowing rings are fashioned, and what is the material of Jupiter’s belts, what the substance of comets’ tails, and the darting Leonids, or the Aurora’s banners—but that man is not yet born.

Besides investigating the corona in the coming eclipse, the spectro-

scope, telescope, and camera will seize the precious opportunity to study

THE SHADOW BANDS AND SUN SPOTS.

About the sun amid the spires of the corona are "rifts" which seem like narrow bars of darkness. They reach from the sun's limb or edge to the outer night beyond the coronal fires. These rifts "much resemble the cloud shadows which radiate from the sun before a thunder shower." Sometimes they are curved, which proves them to be something more than mere shadows, and sometimes, by each darkling rift, lie long, tremulous pennons of light. What are these rifts and bands of shade? What are those accompanying gonfalons of quivering light?

As yet these questions are unanswered. Long ago, when telescopes were new-comers into astronomical science, a daring observer proclaimed that he had seen spots on the sun. Great wrath arose at the assertion. The sun, the perfect sun, marred by spots! Never! However, we have learned that instead of being perfect, our sun is a very crude, inchoate, formative mass, and sun spots are plenty. It has been proved that these spots are *on* the sun, and not bodies floating on that burning sea: neither is it absolutely certain that they are depressions in the sun's surface. Whatever they are, blessed be sun spots, for they have helped us to understand much of sun-structure.

An eclipse offers a favorable opportunity to study the *limb of the sun*, the limb being the edge of the disk. When the eclipse of totality has almost crept over the sun's face, or is beginning to creep off, then the edge of the disk shown is brought into strong relief, and among other objects of interest sun spots may find a place. If on the sun's northern or southern mid-zones, where such spots "most do congregate," one lies on the extreme verge of the limb, then the moment to study sun spots is most favorable. It is from them that we have learned the fact of the sun's rotation on its axis, and that the time required for one revolution is about twenty-five days and five hours. This remarkable discovery was one of the first fruits of the study of sun spots.

They have also distinctly declared that the visible sun-surface is not solid, nor molten, but vaporous.

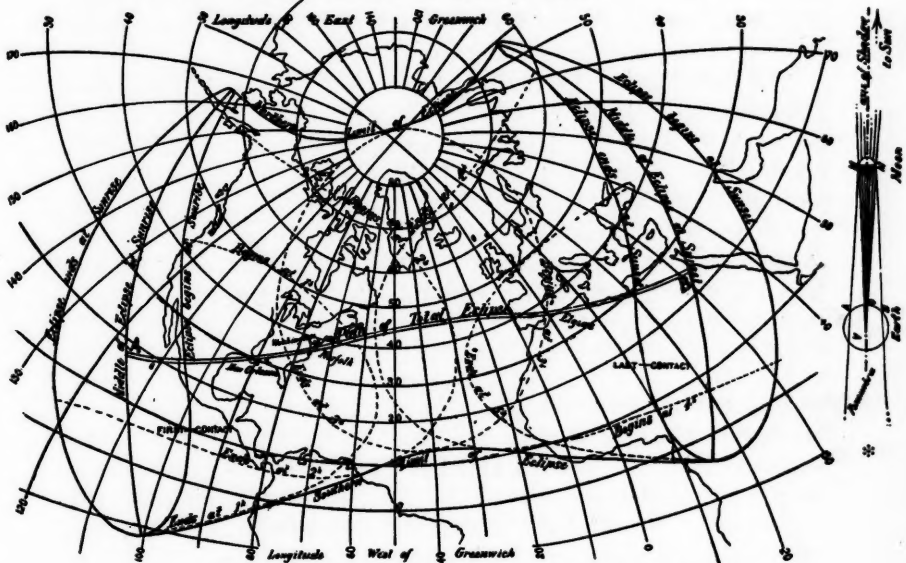
Part of the investigations of May 28th will be directed, not to the sun itself, but to the space lying between the sun and Mercury. It has been the dream of many astronomers that about half way between the sun and Mercury lies a little planet, lost in the effulgence of the sun. Sir William Ball names this the "Planet of Romance." Other astronomers have searched for it, christening it Vulcan before it has been found. If ever such a planet rolled exactly between the earth and

the sun, it would sometime be seen crawling like a black dot across the sun's disk. In the gloom of an eclipse such an orb might show its face if its position as regards the earth were favorable. Most astronomers have concluded that there is no such planet, but that the space between Mercury and the sun is empty.

THE COURSE OF THE ECLIPSE.

All this work and observation being laid out for the few seconds occupied by the total eclipse of May 28, 1900, at what hour shall we

TOTAL ECLIPSE of MAY 28th 1900.



Notes. The hours of beginning and ending are expressed in Greenwich Mean Time.

On this map the path of the darkest portion of the shadow is shown from A to B by the double lines. The path of partial darkness reaches from a little beyond the north pole to the equator, the eclipse being visible in the northern half of the Western Hemisphere. The curved and dotted lines show the progress of the eclipse from west to east, from sunrise to sunset, and the hours when it will be visible at different degrees of longitude.

* The darkest part of this shadow is 170 miles wide. The penumbra, or lighter shadow, is 4,393 miles wide.

look for it? Where will the earth reach the path of the moon's line of shadow? The northern limit of visibility of the eclipse will be through Alaska, across the pole and Greenland into Siberia; the southern limit of visibility will fall over the northern provinces of South America, the Western Hemisphere being the part of the globe turned towards the sun during the eclipse. The eclipse will be at sunrise on the western portion of the path, at sunset on the eastern. The path of total eclipse shadow will pass across the United States from New

Orleans to Norfolk, then across the Atlantic, and will touch the coast of Portugal a little north of Coimbra. Entering Spain, its way will lie through Manzanares, and it will arrive at the Mediterranean near Alicante, thence to Algeria, a little north of the city of Algiers; next the hot and solemn stillness of the desert will know its gloom; finally, where ruined Thebes sits watching the Nile, dimness will brood at sunset. There where ancient Egypt worshipped Amun—the sun in Aries—and where Memnon sang to him at sunrise, the shadow will drift away, and the face of the Day King will shine clear at setting. At New Orleans the eclipse will be at 7.30 in the morning; at Norfolk an hour later; it will not reach Spain until 4.15 P.M. (Greenwich time). In the United States, while the eclipse will last a trifle longer at the coast stations, inland stations will be preferred for observations on account of atmospheric conditions.

The United States, Portugal, and Spain will offer the best opportunities for observations. Science ignores the enmities of war. Before the magic of grand celestial phenomena political exasperations die for the scientists. France and England will send parties to unite with the Spanish astronomers in their observational work. While bulletins of war fly abroad, and the scars of strife are fresh, Science will call her children to her feet and hold a Council of Peace. No one of the observers will claim information gained as his alone, but, like the early Christian, they will "have all things in common."



PHILISTIA

BY FLORENCE EARLE COATES

SHE waits for man and leads him artfully,
 In seeming freedom that beguiles his will,
 Unto the great wheels grinding in her mill;
 And with a voice of wooing melody
 Entreats him: "Lo! all gifts I proffer thee,—
 All joys that adolescent dreams fulfil,
 All riches that old age must covet still,—
 So thou wilt bow thee down and worship me!"
 And, list'ning her, the spirit that would live
 Must hear, from far, another message sent:
 Allured by wiles that snare, while yet they please,
 Persuaded by her luxury and ease,—
 Must pray, with passion, not to be content,
 And toil for triumphs that she cannot give!

THE SIEGE OF PLEVNA

By Stephen Crane

Author of "The Red Badge of Courage," etc.

THIRD IN THE SERIES OF "GREAT BATTLES OF THE WORLD"



WHEN the Russian army swarmed through the Shipka Pass of the Balkans, there was really nothing before it but a man and an opportunity. Osman Pasha suddenly and with great dexterity took his force into Plevna, a small Bulgarian town near the Russian line of march.

The military importance of Plevna lay in the fact that this village of a mere seventeen hundred people was the junction of the roads from Widen, Sophia, Biela, Zimnitsa, Nikopolis, and the Shipka Pass. Osman's move was almost entirely on his own initiative. He had no great reputation, and, like Wellington in the early part of the Peninsula campaign, he was obliged to do everything with the strength of his own shoulders. The stupidity of his superiors amounted almost to an oppression.

The Russians recognized the strategic importance of Plevna a moment too late. On July 18, 1877, General Krudener at Nicopolis received orders to occupy Plevna at once. He seems to have moved promptly, but long before he could arrive Osman's tired but dogged battalions were already in the position.

The Turkish regular of that day must have resembled very closely his fellow of the present. Von Moltke, who knew the Turks well and whose remarkable mind clearly outlined and prophesied the result of several more recent Balkan campaigns, said: "An impetuous attack may be expected from the Turks, but not an obstinate and lasting defence." Historically, the opinion of the great German Field-Marshal seems very curious. Even in the late war between Greece and Turkey, the attacks of the Turkish troops were usually anything but impetuous. They were fearless, but very leisurely. In regard to the lasting and obstinate defence, one has only to regard the siege of Plevna to understand that Von Moltke was for the moment writing carelessly.

After Plevna, the word went forth that the most valuable weapon of the Turk was his shovel. When Osman arrived, the defences of Plevna consisted of an ordinary block-house, but he at once set his

troops at work digging intrenchments and throwing up redoubts which were located with great skill. Soon the vicinity of the town was one great fortress. Osman coolly was attempting to stem the Russian invasion with a force of these strange Turkish troops, patient, enduring, sweet-tempered, and ignorant, dressed in slovenly overcoats and sheep-skin sandals, living on a diet of black bread and cucumbers.

Receiving the order from the Grand Duke Nicolas, General Krudener at Nikopolis despatched at dawn of the next day six thousand five hundred men with about seven batteries to Plevna. No effective scouting had been done. The Russian General, Schilder-Schuldner, riding comfortably in his carriage in the customary way of Russian commanders of the time, had absolutely no information that a strong Turkish force had occupied the position. His column had been allowed to distribute itself over a distance of seventeen miles. On the morning of the 20th an attack was made with great confidence by the troops which had come up. Two Russian regiments even marched victoriously through the streets of Plevna, throwing down their heavy packs and singing for joy of the easy capture. But suddenly a frightful fusillade began from all sides. The elated regiments melted in the streets. Infuriated by religious ardor, despising the value of a Christian's life, the Turks poured out from their concealed places, and there occurred a great butchery. The Russian Nineteenth Regiment of the line was cut down to a few fragments. Much artillery ammunition was captured. The Russians lost two thousand seven hundred men. The knives of the Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks had been busy in the streets.

After this victory Osman might have whipped Krudener, but the Russian leaders had been suddenly aroused to the importance of taking Plevna, and Krudener was almost immediately reinforced with three divisions. Within the circle of defence, the Turk was using his shovel. Osman gave the garrison no rest. If a man was not shooting, he was digging. The well-known Grivitza Redoubt was greatly strengthened, and some defences on the east side of the town were completed. Osman's situation was desperate, but his duty to his country was vividly defined. If he could hold this strong Turkish force on the flank of the Russians, their advance on Constantinople would hardly be possible. The Russian leaders now thoroughly understood this fact, and they tried to make the army investing Plevna more than a containing force.

The Grand Duke Nicolas had decided to order an assault on the 30th of July. Krudener telegraphed him—the Grand Duke was eighty miles from Plevna—that he hesitated in his views of prospective success. The Grand Duke replied sharply, ordering that the assault be made. It seems that Krudener went into the field in the full expectation of being beaten.

Now appears in the history of the siege a figure at once sinister and foolish. Subordinate in command to Krudener was Lieutenant-General Prince Schahofskoy, who had an acute sense of his own intelligence and in most cases dared to act independently of the orders of his chief. But to offset him, there suddenly galloped into his camp a brilliant young Russian commander, a man who has set his name upon Plevna even as the word underlies the towering reputation of Osman Pasha. General Skobelev had come from the Grand Duke Nicolas with an order directing Prince Schahofskoy to place the young man in command of a certain brigade of Caucasian Cossacks. The Prince grew stormy with outraged pride, and practically told Skobelev to take the Cossacks and go to the devil with them.

The Russians began a heavy bombardment, to which Osman's guns replied with spirit. The key of the position was the Grivitza Redoubt. Krudener himself attacked it with eighteen battalions of infantry and ten batteries. And at the same time Prince Schahofskoy thundered away on his side. The latter at last became furious at Krudener's lack of success, and resolved to take matters into his own hands. In the afternoon he advanced with three brigades in the face of a devastating Turkish fire, took a hill, and forced the Turks to vacate their first line of intrenchments. His men were completely spent with weariness, and it is supposed that he should have waited on the hill for support from Krudener. But he urged on his tired troops and carried a second position. The Turkish batteries now concentrated themselves upon his line and, really, the Turkish infantry whipped him soundly.

The Russians did not give up the dearly bought gain of ground without desperate fighting. Again and again they furiously charged, but only to meet failure. When night fell, the stealthy-footed irregulars of the Turkish forces crept through the darkness to prey upon the route of the Russian retreat. The utter annihilation of Prince Schahofskoy's force was prevented by Skobelev and the brigade of Cossacks with which the Prince had sent him to the devil. Skobelev's part in this assault was really a matter of clever manoeuvring.

Krudener had failed with gallantry and intelligence. Schahofskoy had failed through pigheadedness and self-confidence.

After this attempt to carry Plevna, the important Russian Generals occupied themselves in mutual recriminations. Krudener bitterly blamed Schahofskoy for not obeying his orders, and Schahofskoy acidulously begged to know why Krudener had not supported him. At the same time they both claimed that the Grand Duke Nicolas, eighty miles away, should never have given an order for an assault on a position of which he had never had a view.

But even if Russian clothing and arms and trinkets were being sold for a pittance in the bazaars of Plevna, the mosques were jammed with

wounded Turks, and such was the suffering that the dead in the streets and in the fields were being gnawed by the pervasive Turkish dog.

A few days later Osman Pasha received the first proper recognition from Constantinople. A small troop of cavalry had wormed its way into Plevna. It was headed by an aide-de-camp of the Sultan. In gorgeous uniform the aide appeared to Osman and presented him with the First Order of the Osmanli, the highest Turkish military decoration. And with this order came a sword the hilt of which flamed with diamonds. Osman Pasha may have preferred a bushel of cucumbers, but at any rate he knew that the Sultan and Turkey at last understood the value of a good soldier. To the speech of the aide, Osman replied with another little speech, and the soldiers in their intrenchments cheered the Sultan.

On August 31st the Turkish General made his one offensive move. He threw part of his force against a Russian redoubt and was obliged to retire with a loss of nearly three thousand men. Afterwards he devoted his troops mainly to the business of improving the defences. He wasted no more in attempts to break out of Plevna.

At this late day of the siege, Prince Charles of Roumania was appointed to the chief command of the whole Russo-Roumanian army. But naturally this office was nominal. General Totoff had the real disposition of affairs, but he did not hold it for very long. General Levitsky, the assistant chief of the Russian general staff, arrived to advise General Totoff under direct orders from the Grand Duke Nicolas. But this siege was to be very well-generalled.

The Grand Duke Nicolas himself came to Plevna. One would think that the Grand Duke would have ended this kaleidoscopic row of superseding generals. But the Great White Czar himself appeared. Osman Pasha, shut up in Plevna, certainly was honored with a great deal of distinguished interest.

However, Alexander II. did his best to give no orders. He had no illusions concerning his military knowledge. With a spirit profoundly kind and gentle, he simply prayed that no more lives would be lost. It is difficult to think what he had to say to his multitudinous generals, each of whom was the genius of the only true plan for capturing Plevna.

At daylight on the 7th of September the Turks saw that the entire army of the enemy had closed in upon them. Amid fields of ripening grain shone the smart red jackets of the hussars. The Turks saw the Bulgarians in sheepskin caps and with their broad scarlet sashes stuck full of knives and pistols. They saw the queer round oilskin shakoes of the Cossacks and the great-coats of thick gray blanketing. They saw the uniforms of the Russian infantry, the green tunics, striped with red. For five days the smoke lay heavy over Plevna.

The 11th was the fête day of the Emperor, and the general assault on that day was arranged as if it had been part of a fête. The cannonade was to begin at daybreak along the whole line and stop at eight o'clock in the morning. The artillery was to play again from eleven o'clock until one o'clock. Then it was to play again from two-thirty to three.

Directly afterwards the Roumanian allies of the Russians moved in three columns against the Grivitza Redoubt. At first all three were repulsed, but with the stimulus of Russian re-enforcements they rallied, and after a long time of almost hand-to-hand fighting the evening closed with them in possession of what was called the key of the Plevna position. They had lost four thousand men, but the victory was fruitless. Anticipating the attack on Grivitza, Osman had caused the building of an inner redoubt. After all their ferocious charging, the Russians were really no nearer to victory.

At three o'clock of that afternoon, Redoubt Number Ten had been assailed by General Schmidnikoff. The firing had been very terrible, but the Russians had charged to the very walls of the redoubt. The Turks not only beat them off, but pursued with great spirit. Two of the scampering Russian battalions were then faced about to beat off the chase. They lay down at a distance of only two hundred yards of the redoubt, and sent the Turks pell-mell back into their fortifications.

At about the same time Skobelev, wearing a white coat and mounted on a white charger, was leading his men over the "green hills" towards the Krishin Redoubt. There was a dense fog. Skobelev's troops crossed two ridges and waded a stream. They began the ascent of a steep slope. Suddenly the fog cleared; the sun shone out brilliantly. The closely massed Russian force was exposed at short range to line after line of Turkish intrenchments. They retired once but rallied splendidly, and before five o'clock Skobelev found himself in possession of Redoubt Number Eleven and Redoubt Number Twelve.

His battalions were thrust like a wedge into the Turkish lines, but the Turkish commander appreciated the situation more clearly than any Russian save Skobelev. The latter's men suffered a frightful fire. Re-enforcements were refused. All during the night the faithful troops of the Czar fought in darkness and without hope. They even built little ramparts of dead men. But on the morning of September 12th Skobelev was compelled to give up all he had gained. The retreat over the "green hills" was little more than a running massacre.

After his return, Skobelev was in a state of excitement and fury. His uniform was covered with blood and mud. His cross of St. George was twisted around his shoulder. His face was black with powder.

His eyes were bloodshot. He said: "My regiments no longer exist."

The Russian assaults had failed at all points. They had begun this last battle with eighty thousand infantry, twelve thousand cavalry, and four hundred and forty guns, and they lost over eighteen thousand men. The multitude of generals again took counsel. There were ferocious animosities, and there might have been open rupture if it were not for the presence of the Czar himself, whose gentleness and good-nature prevented many scenes.

It was decided that the Turks must be starved out. The Russians sent for more troops as well as for heavy supplies of clothing, ammunition, and food. The Czar also sent for General Todleben, who had shown great skill at Sebastopol, and the direction of the siege was put in his hands.

The Turks had been accustomed to reprovision Plevna by the skilful use of devious trails. Todleben took swift steps to put a stop to it, but he did not succeed before a huge convoy had been sent into the town through the adroit management of Chefket Pasha. But the Russian horse soon chased Chefket away and the trails were all closed.

For the most part, the September weather was fine, but this plenitude of sun made the Turkish positions about Plevna almost unbearable. Actual thousands of unburied dead lay scattered over the ridges. At one time the Russian head-quarters made a polite request to be allowed to send some men to enter Grivitza and bury their own dead. But this polite request met with a polite refusal.

On October 19th the Roumanians, who for weeks had been sapping their way up to the Grivitza Redoubt, made a final and desperate attack on it. They were repulsed.

In order to complete the investment, Todleben found it necessary to dislodge the Turks from four villages near Plevna.

The weeks moved by slowly with a stolid and stubborn Turk besieged by a stubborn and stolid Russian. There was occasional firing from the Russian batteries, to which the Turks did not always take occasion to reply. In Plevna there was nothing to eat but meat, and the Turkish soldiers moved about with the hoods of their dirty brown cloaks pulled over their heads. Outside Plevna there were plenty of furs and good coats, but the diet had become so plain that the sugar-loving Russian soldiers would give gold for a pot of jam.

On the cold, cloudy morning of December 11th, when snow lay thickly on all the country, a sudden great booming of guns was heard, and the news flew swiftly that Osman had come out of Plevna at last and was trying to break through the cordon his foes had spread about him. During the night he had abandoned all his defences, and by daybreak he had taken the greater part of his army across the river Vid. Ad-

vancing along the Sophia road, he charged the Russian intrenchments with such energy that the Siberian Regiment stationed at that point was almost annihilated. A desperate fight went on for four hours, with the Russians coming up battalion after battalion. Some time after noon all firing ceased, and later the Turks sent up a white flag. Cheer after cheer swelled over the dreary plain. Osman had surrendered.

The siege had lasted one hundred and forty-two days. The Russians had lost forty thousand men. The Turks had lost thirty thousand men.

The advance on Constantinople had been checked. Skobelev said: "Osman the Victorious he will remain, in spite of his surrender."



GREEN FIRE

BY CLARENCE URMY

FAIR Flora with her jade divining-rod
 Strikes thrice the springtime sod—
 Green fire! Green fire
 From base to spire
 Of every slumbering tree
 Under Heaven's canopy!
 Green fire!
 A bursting, warm desire
 In every tiny seed
 Of grass and reed,
 An upward heart-beat—lo, the earth
 In wantonness of mirth
 Leaps from the darkness winter-lulled,
 A flaming emerald!
 Green fire! Green fire!
 The winds inquire
 Of every flame its will,
 And instantly its fond desires fulfil!
 See! All the land is one great whirl
 Where wreathing fires unfurl
 To wondering eyes
 God's miracle of dyes!
 Green fire!
 And Orpheus with his lyre
 Strikes up a measure sweet
 To flying feet—
 O hear the World in rapturous acclaim,
 As Flora dances, beryl-winged, through flashing flame!

THE TROUBLER OF ISRAEL

By S. R. Crockett

Author of "The Lilac Sunbonnet," "The Stickit Minister"



UNLESS you happen to have been one of a group of five or six young men who every Sunday morning turned their steps towards the little meeting-house in Lady Nixon's Wynd, it is safe to say that you did not know either it or the Doctor of Divinity. That is, unless you were born in the Purple and expert of the mysteries of the Kirk of the Covenants.

The denomination was a small one, smaller even and poorer than is the wont of Scottish sects. But by two infallible signs you might know the faithful. They spoke of the "Boady" and of the "Coave-nants" with a lengthening of that *o* which constituted a shibboleth, and their faces, grim and set mostly, lit up when you spoke of the "Doctor."

Dr. Marcus Lawton of Lady Nixon's Wynd was their joy, their pride, their poetry, the kitchen to their sour controversial bread, the mellow glory of their denomination. (Again you must broaden the *a* indefinitely.)

There was but one fly in the apothecary's ointment pot when my father grew too stiff to attend the Kirk of the Covenants, even once a year, and that was that the Doctor, unable to live and bring up a family on a sadly dwindling stipend (though every man and woman in the little kirk did almost beyond their possible to increase it), had been compelled to bind himself to spend part of the day in a secular pursuit.

At least to the average mind his employment could hardly be called "secular," being nothing more than the secretaryship of the Association for the Propagation of Gospel Literature. But to the true covenant man this sonorous society was composed of mere Erastians, or, what was little better, ex-Erastians and common Voluntaries. The Doctor's office was at the corner of Victoria Street as you turn down towards the Grassmarket. And when any of his flock met him coming or going thither, they turned away their heads—that is, if he had passed the entrance to Lady Nixon's Wynd when they met him. So far, it was understood that he *might* be going to write his sermon in the quiet of

the vestry. After that, there was no escape from the damning conclusion that he was on his way to the shrine of Baal and other Erastian divinities. So the Covenant folk turned away their heads and did not see their minister.

Dr. Marcus Lawton was the son of Dr. Marcus Lawton. When first he succeeded his father, which happened when he was little more than a boy and long before I was born, he was called "young Maister Lawton." Then it was that he lectured on "The Revelation" on Sabbath evenings, his father sitting proudly behind him.

These were great days, and my father, Alexander MacQuhirr, of Drumwhat, still kindles when he tells of them. No need of dubious secretaryships then or of the turning away of faithful heads at the angle of the Candlemaker Row.

But when I began to attend Lady Nixon's regularly things were sorely otherwise. The kirk was dwindled and dwindling—in membership, in influence, most of all in finance. But not at all in devotion, not in enthusiasm, not in the sense of privilege that those who remained were thought worthy to sit under such faithful ministration as that of the Doctor. There was no more any "young Maister Lawton." Nor was a comparison pointed disparagingly by a reference to "the Auld Doctor, young Dr. Marcus's faither, ye ken,"

From the alert, keen-faced, loyal-hearted precentor (no hireling he) to the grave and dignified "kirk-officer," there were not two minds in all that little body of the faithful.

You remember MacHaffie—a steadfast man "Haffie"—no more of his name ever used. Indeed, it was but lately that I knew he ever owned the prefatory Mac. He would give you a helpful hint oftentimes (after you had passed the plate), "*It's no himsel' the day!*" or more warningly and particularly, "*It's a student.*" Then Haffie would cover your retreat, sometimes going the length of making a pretence of conversation with you as far as the door, or on urgent occasions (as when the Doctor was so far left to himself as to exchange with a certain "popular preacher") even taking you downstairs and letting you out secretly by a postern door which led, in the approved manner of romances, into a side street down which, all unseen, you could escape from your fate. But Haffie always kept an eye on you to see that you did not abstract your penny from the plate. That was the payment he exacted for his good offices.

But all this was before the advent of Gullibrand. You have heard of him, I doubt not—Gullibrand of Barker, Barker & Gullibrand, provision merchants, with branches all over the three kingdoms. His name is on every blank wall.

Gullibrand was not an Edinburgh man. He came, they say, from Leicester or some Midland English town, and brought a great reputation

with him. He had been mayor in his own city, a philanthropist almost by profession, and the light and lawgiver of his own particular sect always. I have often wondered what brought him to Lady Nixon's Wynd. Perhaps he was attracted by the smallness of our numbers and by the thought that, in default of any congregation of his own peculiar sect in the Northern metropolis, he could "boss" the Kirk of the Covenants as he had "bossed" the Company of Apocalyptic Believers.

It was said, with I know not what truth, that the first time Mr. Gullibrand came to the Kirk of the Covenants the Doctor was lecturing in his ordinary upon Daniel's Beast with Ten Horns. And if that be so our angelical Doctor had reason to rue to the end of his life that the discourse had been so faithful and soul-searching. Gullibrand thought his interpretation of the ninth horn very deficient and told him so, but was so far satisfied that he intimated his intention of sending in his lines next week.

At first it was thought to be a great thing that the Kirk of the Covenants in Lady Nixon's Wynd should receive so wealthy and distinguished an adherent.

"Quite an acquisition, my dear," said the hard-pressed treasurer, thinking of the ever-increasing difficulty of collecting the stipend and of the church expenses, which had a way of totalling up beyond all expectation.

"Bide a wee till we see, Henry," said his more cautious wife; "to see the color o' the man's siller is no to see the color o' his heart."

And to this she added a thoughtful rider.

"And after a' what does a bursen Englishy craitur like that ken about the Kirk o' the Co-a-venants!"

And as good Mistress Walker prophesied as she took her douce way homeward with her husband (honorary treasurer and unpaid precentor) down the Middle Meadow Walk, even so in the fulness of time it fell out.

Mr. Jacob Gullibrand gave liberally, at which the kindly heart of the Treasurer was elate within him. Mr. Jacob Gullibrand got a vacant seat in the front of the gallery, which had once belonged to a great family from which, the faithful dying out, the refuse had declined upon a certain Sadducean opinion calling itself Episcopacy. And from this highest seat in the synagogue Mr. Jacob blinked with a pair of fishy eyes at the Doctor.

Then in the fulness of time Mr. Jacob became a "manager," because it was considered right that he should have a say in the disposition of the temporalities of which he provided so great a part. Entry to the Session was more difficult. For the Session is a select and conservative body—an inner court, a defenced place set about with thorns and not to be lightly approached. But to such a man as Gullibrand all doors in

the religious world open too easily. Whence cometh upon the church of God mockings and scorn, the strife of tongues—and, after the vials have been poured out, at the door one with the sharp sword in his hand, the sword that hath two edges.

So after presiding at many revival meetings and heading the lists of many subscriptions, Jacob Gullibrand became an elder in the Kirk of the Covenants and a power in Lady Nixon's Wynd.

He had for some time been a leading Director of the Association for the Propagation of Gospel Literature. And so in two capacities he was the Doctor's master. Then having gathered to him a party, recruited chiefly from the busybodies in other men's matters and other women's characters, Jacob Gullibrand turned him about, and set himself to drive the minister and folk of the Kirk of the Covenants as he had been wont to drive his clerks and shop-assistants.

He went every Sabbath into the vestry after service to reprove and instruct Dr. Marcus Lawton. His sermons (so he told him) were too old-fashioned. They did not "grip the people." They did not "take hold on the man in the street." They were not in line with "the present great movement." In short, they lacked modernity.

Dr. Marcus answered meekly. Man more modest than our dear Doctor there was not in all the churches or outside of them.

"I am conscious of my many imperfections," he said. "My heart is heavy for the weakness and unworthiness of the messenger in presence of the greatness of the message; but, sir, I do the best I can, and I can only ask Him who hath the power to give the increase."

"But how," asked Jacob Gullibrand, "can you expect any increase when I never see you preaching in the market-place, proclaiming at the street-corners, denouncing upon a hundred platforms the sins of the times. You should speak to the times, my good sir, you should speak to the times."

"As worthy Dr. Leighton, that root out of a dry ground, sayeth," murmured our Doctor with a sweet smile, "there be so many that are speaking to the times, you might surely allow one poor man to speak for eternity." *

But the quotation was thrown away upon Jacob Gullibrand.

"I do not know this Leighton—and I think I am acquainted with all the ministers who have the root of the matter in them in this and in other cities of the kingdom. And I call upon you, sir, to stir us up with rousing evangelical addresses instead of set sermons. We are asleep, and we need awakening."

"I am all too conscious of it," said the Doctor, "but it is not my talent."

"Then if you do know it, if your conscience tells you of your failure, why not get in some such preacher as Boanerges Simpson of Maitland,

or even throw open your pulpit to some earnest merchant-evangelist such as—well, as myself?"

But Mr. Gullibrand had gone a step too far. The Doctor could be a Boanerges also upon occasion, though he walked always in quiet ways and preferred the howe of life to the mountain tops.

"No, sir," he said firmly, "no unqualified or unlicensed man shall ever preach in my pulpit so long as I am minister and teaching elder of a Covenant-keeping Kirk!"

"We'll see about that!" said Jacob Gullibrand, thrusting out his under lip over his upper half-way to his nose. Then, seizing his tall hat and unrolled umbrella, he stalked angrily out.

And he kept his word. He did see about it. In Lady Nixon's Wynd there was division. On the one side were ranged the heads of families generally, the folk staid and set in the old ways—"gospel-hardened" the Gullibrandites called them. With the Doctor were the old standards of the Kirk, getting a little dried maybe with standing so long in their post-holes, but, so far as in them lay, faithful unto death.

But the younger folk mostly followed the new light. There were any number of Societies, Gospel Bands, Armies of the Blue Ribbon, and of the White—all well and better than well in their place. But being mostly imported from England and all without exception begun, carried on, and ended in Gullibrand, they were out of keeping with the plain song psalms of the Kirk of the Martyrs. There were teas also at "Mount Delectable," the residence of Gullibrand, where after the singing of many hymns and the superior blandishments of the Misses Gullibrand, it was openly said that if the kirk in Lady Nixon's Wynd was to be preserved the Doctor must "go." He was in the way. He was a fossil. He had no modern light. He took no interest in the "Work." He would neither conduct a campaign of street preaching nor allow an unordained evangelist into his pulpit. The Doctor must go. Mr. Gullibrand was sure that a majority of the congregation were with him. There were qualms in many hearts which even three cups of Gullibrand's Coffee Essence warm in the belly could not cure.

After all, the Doctor was the Doctor, and he had baptized most part of those present. Besides, they minded that time when Death came to their houses, and that noble presence, that saintly prayer, that uplifted hand of blessing. But in the psychological moment, with meet introduction from the host, uprose the persecuted evangelist.

"If he was unworthy to enter the pulpits of Laodicean ministers, men neither cold nor hot, whom every earnest evangelist should—(here he continued the quotation and illustrated it with an appropriate gesture) he at least thanked God that he was no Doctor of Divinity.

Nor of those who would permit themselves to be dictated to by self-appointed and self-styled ministers."

And so on, and so on. The type does not vary.

The petition or declaration already in Gullibrand's breast pocket was then produced, adopted, and many signatures of members and adherents were appended under the influence of that stirring appeal. Great was Gullibrand. The morning light brought counsel. But it was too late. Gullibrand would erase no name.

"You signed the document, did you not? Of your own free will? That is your handwriting. Very well then!"

The blow fell on the Sabbath before the summer communion, always a great time in the little Zion in Lady Nixon's Wynd. A deputation of two, one being Jacob Gullibrand, elder, waited on Dr. Marcus Lawton after the second diet of worship. They gave in a paper to read in which he was tepidly complimented upon his long and faithful services and informed that the undersigned felt so great an anxiety for his health that they besought him to retire to a well-earned leisure and to permit a younger and more vigorous man to bear the burden and the heat of the day. (The choice of language was Gullibrand's.) No mention was made of any retiring allowance nor yet of the manse in which his father before him had lived all his life and in which he himself had been born. But these things were clearly enough understood.

"What need has he of a manse or an allowance either?" said Gullibrand; "his family are mostly doing for themselves, and he has no doubt made considerable savings. Besides which, he holds a comfortable appointment with a large salary, as I have good reason to know."

"But," he added to himself, "he may not hold that very long either. I will teach any man to cross Jacob Gullibrand."

The Doctor sat in the little vestry with the tall blue scroll spread out before him. The light of the day suddenly seemed to have grown dim, and somehow he could hardly see to smooth out the curled edges.

"It is surely raining without," said the Doctor, and lighted the gas with a shaking hand. He looked down the list of names of members and adherents appended to the request that he should retire. The written letters danced a little before his eyes, and he adjusted his glasses more firmly.

"William Gilmour, elder," he murmured. "Ah, his father was at school with me. I mind that I baptized William the year I was ordained. He was a boy at my Bible Class, a clever boy too. I married him, and he came in here and grat like a bairn when his first wife died, sitting on that chair. I called on the Lord to help William Gilmour; and now—he wants me away.

"Jacob Gullibrand, elder."

The Doctor passed the name of his persecutor without a comment.

"Christopher Begbie, manager. He was kind to me the year the bairns died."

(Such was Christopher's testimony. The year before I went to Edinburgh the Doctor had lost a well-beloved wife and two children within a week of each other. He had preached the Sabbath after on the text "All thy waves have gone over me!" Christopher Begbie, manager, had been kind then. Pass, Christopher.)

"Robert Armstrong, manager. Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted," said the Doctor, and stared at the lozenges of the window till colored spots danced before his old eyes. "Robert Armstrong, for whose soul I wrestled even as Jacob with his Maker; Robert Armstrong, that walked with me through the years together and with whom I have had so much sweet communion, even Robert also does not think me longer fit to break the bread of life among this people!"

Pass, Robert! There is that on the blue foolscap which the Doctor hastened to wipe away with his sleeve. But it is doubtful if such things are ever wholly wiped away.

"John Malcolm. Ah, John, I do not wonder. Perhaps I was over faithful with thee, John. But it was for thy soul's good. I did not think that the son of thy father would bear malice!"

"Margaret Fountainhall, Elizabeth Fountainhall—the children of many prayers. Their mother was a godly woman indeed. And you too, Margaret and Elizabeth, would sit under a younger man. I mind when I prepared you together for your first communion!"

The Doctor sighed and bent his head lower upon the paper. "Ebenezer Redpath, James Bannatyne, Samuel Gardiner"—he passed the names rapidly till he came to one—"Isobel Swan."

The Doctor smiled at the woman's name. It was the first time he had smiled since they gave him the paper and he realized what was written there.

"Ah, Isobel," he murmured, "once in a far-off day you did not think as now you think!"

And he saw himself, a slim stripling, in his father's pew, and across the aisle a girl who worshipped him with her eyes. And so the Doctor passed from the name of Isobel Swan, still smiling—but kindly and graciously, for our Doctor had it not in him to be anything else.

He glanced his eye up and down the list. He seemed to miss something.

"Henry Walker, treasurer. I do not see your name, Henry. Many is the hard battle I have had with thee in the session, Henry. Dost thou not want thine old adversary out of thy path once and for

all? And Mary, thy wife. Tart is thy tongue, Mary, but sweet as a hazel-nut in the frost of October thy true heart!

"Thomas Baillie. Where art thou, true Thomas? I crossed thee in the matter of the giving out of the eleventh paraphrase, Thomas. Yet I do not see thy name. Is it possible that thou hast forgotten the nearer ill and looked back on the days of old—when Allan Symington and Gilbert his brother, and thou and I, Thomas Baillie, went to the house of God in company?—No, these things are not forgotten. I thank God for that. The name of Thomas Baillie is not here."

And the Doctor folded up the blue crackling paper and placed it carefully between the leaves of the great pulpit Bible.

"It is the week of communion," he said. "It is not meet that I should mingle secular thoughts with the memory of the broken body and the shed blood. On your knees, Marcus Lawton, and ask forgiveness for your repining and discriminating among the sheep of the flock whom it is yours to feed on a coming Lord's day. And are they not all yours—your responsibility, your care, ay, Marcus—even—even Jacob Gullibrand!"

It was the Sabbath of High Communion in the Kirk of the Covenants. Nixon's Wynd, ordinarily so grim and bare, so gritty underfoot and narrow overhead, now seemed to many a spacious way to heaven, down which walked the elect in a way literally narrow, and literally steep, and literally closed with a gate at which few, very few, went in.

A full hour too soon they began to arrive, strange, quaint figures, some of them, gathered from the nooks of the old town. They arrived in twos and threes—the children's children of the young plants of grace who saw Claverhouse ride down the West Bow on his way to Killiekrankie. As far as Leith Walk you might know them, bent a little, mostly coopers in the Trongate, wrights in the Kirk Wynd, carpenters at the Port. They had their little "King's Printer" Bibles in the long tails of their blue coats—for black had not yet come in to make uniform all the congregations of every creed. But the mistress walking a little behind carried her Bible decently wrapped in a white napkin along with a sprig of southernwood.

All that day there hung palpable and almost visible about Nixon's Wynd a sweet savor as of "Naphtali," and the Persecutions, and Last Testimonies in the Grassmarket. But in the shrine itself there was nothing grim, but only graciousness and consolation and the sense of the living presence of the Hope of Israel. For our Doctor was there sitting among his elders. The sun shone through the narrow windows, and just over the wall, if it was your good fortune to be near those on

the left-hand side, you could see the top of the Martyrs' monument in the kirk-yard of old Greyfriars.

It was great to see the Doctor on such days, great to hear him. Beneath the white cloths glimmered fair on the scarred bookboards, bleached clean in honor of the breaking of holy bread. The silver cups, ancient as Drumclog and Shalloch, so they said, shone on the table of communion, and we all looked at them when the Doctor said the solemn and mysterious words, "wine on the lees well-refined."

For there are no High Churchmen so truly high as the men of the little protesting covenanting remnant of the Reformation Kirk of Scotland—none so jealous in guarding the sacraments, none that can weave about them such a mantle of awe and reverence.

The Doctor was concluding his after-table address. Very reverend and noble he looked, his white hair falling down on his shoulders, his hands ever and anon wavering to a blessing, his voice now rising sonorous as a trumpet, but mostly of flute-like sweetness in keeping with his words. He never spoke of any subject but one on such a day. That was, the love of Christ.

"Fifty-one summer communions have I been with you in this place," so he concluded, "breaking the bread and speaking the word. Fifty-one years to-day since my father took me by the hand and led me up to sit by his side. Few there be here in the flesh this day who saw that. But there are some. Of such I see around me three,—Henry Walker and Robert Armstrong and John Malcolm. It is fitting that those who saw the beginning should see the end."

At these words a kind of sough passed over the folk. You have seen the wind passing over a field of ripe barley. Well, it was like that. From my place in the gallery I could see faces whiten, shoulders suddenly stoop, as the congregation bent forward to catch every word. A woman sobbed. It was Isobel Swan. The white faces turned angrily, as if to chide a troublesome child.

"It has come upon me suddenly, dear friends," the Doctor went on, "even as I hope death itself will. Sudden as any death it is, and more bitter. For myself, I was not conscious of failing energies, of natural strength abated. But you, dear friends, have seen clearer than I the needs of the Kirk of the Covenants. One hundred and six years Marcus Lawtons have ministered in this place. From to-day they shall serve tables no more. Once—and not so long ago, it seemed, looking back—I had a son of my body, a plant reared amid hopes and prayers and watered with tears. The Lord gave. The Lord took. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

There ensued a silence, deep, still—yet somehow also throbbing, expectant. Isobel Swan did not sob again. She had hidden her face.

"And now my last word. After fifty-one years of service in this

place it is hard to come to the end of the last furrow, to drop the hand from the plough, never more to go forth in the morning as the sower sowing precious seed."

"No—no—no—!"

It was not Isobel Swan now—but the whole congregation. Here and there, back and forth, subdued, repressed, ashamed, but irresistible, the murmur ran. But the Doctor's voice did not shake.

"Fifty-one years of unworthy service, my friends. What of that?—a moment in the eternity of God. Never again shall I meet you here as your minister. But I charge you that when we meet in That Day you will bear me witness whether I have loved houses or lands or father or mother or wife or children better than you! And now fare you well. The memory of bygone communions, of hours of refreshment and prayer in this place, of death-beds blessed and unforgotten in your homes, shall abide with me as they shall abide with you. The Lord send among you a worthier servant than Marcus Lawton, your fellow-laborer and sometime minister. Again and for the last time, fare you well!"

It was a strange communion. The silver cups still stood on the table, battered but glistening. The plates of the bread that had been blessed were beside them. The elders sat around. A low, inarticulate murmur of agony travelled about the little kirk as the Doctor sat down and covered his face with his hands, as was his custom after pronouncing the benediction.

Then in the strange hush uprose the tall, angular form of William Gilmour from the midst of the session, his bushy eyebrows working and twitching.

"Oh, sir," he said in forceful jerks of speech, "dinna leave us. I signed the paper under a misapprehension. The Lord forgi'e me! I withdraw my name. Jacob Gullibrand may dischairge me if he likes!"

He sat down as abruptly as he had risen.

Then there was a kind of commotion all over the congregation. One after another rose and spoke after their kind, some vehemently, some with shamed faces.

"And I!" "And I!" "And I!" cried a dozen at a time. "Bide with us, Doctor! We cannot want you! Pray for us!"

Then Henry Walker, the white-haired, sharp-featured treasurer and precentor of Nixon's Wynd, stretched out his hand. The Doctor had been speaking, as is the custom, not from the pulpit but from the communion-table, about which the elders sat. He had held the Gullibrand manifesto in his hands. But as he lifted them up in his final blessing he had dropped it.

Henry Walker took it and stood up.

"Is it your will that I tear this paper? Those contrary keep their seats—those agreeable *stand up!*"

As one man the whole congregation stood up.

All, that is, save Jacob Gullibrand. He sat for a moment, and then amid a silence which could be felt he rose and staggered out like a man smitten with sore sickness. He never set foot in Nixon's Wynd again.

Henry Walker waited till the door had closed upon the troubler of Israel, the paper still in his hand. Then very solemnly he tore it into shreds and cast them under foot.

He waited a moment for the Doctor to speak, but he did not.

"And you also will withdraw your resignation and stay with us?" he said.

The Doctor could not answer in words. But he nodded his head. It was indeed the desire of his heart. Then in a loud and surprising voice, jubilant and yet with a kind of godly anger in it, Henry Walker gave out the closing psalm:

"All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice,
Him serve with mirth, His praise forthtell,
Come ye before Him and rejoice!"



COSTANZA SINGS

BY MARIE VAN VORST

MY love is a rider (and life's at its pace!)
He rides to the battle, he rides to the chase;
His armor is burnished, his nodding plume curled,
(And would I could follow him over the world!)

Nor distance, nor danger can keep us apart,
He comes with the shadows, he lies on my heart;
He's gone when the midnight's black pinions are furled,
(And would I could follow him over the world!)

I'd gladly arise, don bonnet and sword,
And follow the steps of my Love and my Lord;
I'd ride by his side when the lances are hurled,
(And would I could follow him over the world!)

ONE WAY TO SEE THE PARIS EXPOSITION

By *Elizabeth Robins Pennell*

Author of "Two Pilgrims' Progress" and "Our Sentimental Journey"



THE world has grown a trifle tired of the big international shows that were a novelty fifty years ago. But even if the Exposition in Paris were without other merit—as, of course, it cannot be—it would still make an excellent excuse for a journey to France, and, you may take my word for it, no country is so well worth journeying to, especially with a cycle.

Thanks to the League of American Wheelmen and the Cyclists' Touring Club, it has become so absurdly easy to enter the country with a bicycle that it would be flying in the face of Fortune to go there without one. You have only to belong to either organization, and a properly filled-up ticket will send you through the French Custom-House free, except for a small fine which protects you from the native cyclist's heavier tax. You also receive a three-months' permit to show on demand. But if you have no ticket of membership, you must deposit fifty francs, which may or may not be returned, according as you have time and patience to claim them on leaving the country. The Cyclists' Touring Club is still more benevolent. It is publishing this spring a series of special French itineraries,—small enough to slip into your pocket,—which will direct you on your way from the port where you happen to land to the Exposition; from St. Malo or Cherbourg, Havre or Dieppe, among the orchards of Normandy; from Calais or Boulogne, among the lagoons of Picardy, through some of the loveliest scenery in France.

One of the little volumes in the "*Guides-Bertol*" series has a map with four circles, or zones, drawn accurately round the town. But it is better to draw a ring for yourself, not with the exactness of a compass, but with a freedom that will include and omit just what you please. At a glance you will see that Paris is surrounded by a succession of palaces and castles, of parks and forests, of Millet's plains and Corot's pastorals; that is, by something of the variety of as extraordinarily

778 One Way to See the Paris Exposition

varied a country as France. For facts and figures, roads, distances, and time, I refer you to those two admirable institutions, the Touring Club de France and the Cyclists' Touring Club, and their publications. The fees are moderate, while the road-books, maps, and itineraries cost but a few shillings or francs, a few pence or sous more. I cannot insist too strongly on membership as an essential to the pleasure of the tour.

The first strong emotion will come when you start on your flight from the Exposition and are riding, say, across the Place de la Concorde, along the Rue de Rivoli, to the Place de la Bastille, with your heart in your mouth at every toot of the motor horn. According to the papers, the tooting, that was frequent enough for my confusion a few months ago when I was last in Paris, now never stops. The motor-man drives a sort of Juggernaut car through the stricken streets of Paris, while peaceful citizens go about, revolvers in their pockets, ready to shoot him as soon—or as late—as he runs over them! Nor, if it be a Sunday or a feast-day, is peace yet within reach when the Avenue Daumesnil has eventually led you to the Bois de Vincennes, the Epping Forest of Paris. It may have its castle and its history, but the playground of the people does not seem the most appropriate stage, even in memory, for a royal idyl, with Louis XIV. and Louise de la Vallière as lovers, or for the tragedy that made Europe tremble when the Duc d'Enghien fell at a word of Napoleon. The loves of Gavarni's little *grisettes*, the comedies of Murger's Bohemians, would be much more in character. But once across the Marne at Charenton, once past Maisons-Alfort and Villeneuve-St. Georges, you begin to have hope of that other forest, so vast that all the tourists in the world could not cock-nify it.

When I went to the Forest of Fontainebleau in the age of tricycles, I trained it as far as Melun. I look back to the afternoon from Melun as one of those perfect interludes that, every now and then, repay the cyclist for hours of rain and head-wind and bad roads. It was almost the first of my long rides, and the month was September. I can still remember the strong, sweet autumn scents of the near forest as we crossed the brown moorlands, with the raindrops of the last shower glittering on the heather, and also our indignation with the luggage-carrier that would keep swinging round, interfering with our delight in it all. I can still remember Chailly, so busy "slumbering in the plain" that not for love or money could a workman be found to help us; and then the great plain of Bière beyond, "where the *Angelus* of Millet still tolls upon the ear of fancy," and the old women, carrying bundles of wood, or at work in the fields, fell into the correct studio poses as we passed; and then, the little street of Barbizon, with the low, gray, gabled cottages, and our first sharp pang of disappointment when we found a waiter in a dress-coat at Sirou's, that famous artists' inn, and

Millet's house so pretty and dainty that his much-advertised poverty dwindled into the lightest burden a man could bear.

Millet's fate does not seem so tragic in Barbizon as in his biographies. After all, he lived the life that pleased him in the midst of the scenery and people he loved. One day, years before he had been heard of, save by a few artists and fewer small dealers, he and Jacque, with their wives and children and a maid-servant—and a maid-servant does not point to desperate straits—left Paris for a holiday jaunt through the Forest of Fontainebleau as gayly as any of the gay Rudolphes and Mimis of the time. And when they discovered Barbizon, already discovered by Diaz, they decided that it was good for them to be there.

It is not easy to know just where to go after Fontainebleau. There is a temptation to ride southward, through the Forest and along the poplared highway, to the beautiful little towns of Nemours and Montargis, or westward, across the vast level land, to Chartres, with its great cathedral. Anywhere and everywhere in France the cyclist is apt to follow the example of Mr. Henry James in his "Little Tours," and not to finish the excursions planned from one particular centre until several provinces have been explored. But what are plans made for, if not to be unmade?—and you can be wheeling to south or west, allowing nothing to stop you save the sea, while I keep up the pleasant fiction of the circular route, upon which Rambouillet, reached by way of Etampes, is the next castle—only be sure to look into your road-book for the road without paving. Marie Antoinette, I believe, called Rambouillet a *crapaudière*. A mere ordinary mortal like myself would envy the toad whose right it was to creep into such a splendid hole, with the ghost of Rabelais, among others, for company.

But, then, the ordinary mortal has not the chance, with Marie Antoinette, to choose from the castled inheritance of royalty that, in her day, stretched—and still stretches, but now the inheritance of the people—around Paris. Not much more than forty kilometres from Rambouillet—and you can follow her there without too flagrant a violation of the circle—is the Château de Versailles, "ending in royal Parks and Pleasaunces, gleaming Lakelets, Arbours, Labyrinths, the Ménagerie, and Great and Little Trianons," which she loved best. It may be the delight of the tourist, the joy of the Paris cockney on Sundays when the fountains play, it may be the bric-à-brac shop Thackeray called it, but still it is—Versailles, the stateliest relic left of a stately age. "Let them disguise the place as they will," Thackeray wrote, "and plaster the walls with pictures as they please, it will be hard to think of any family but one, as one traverses this vast gloomy edifice;" that is of the three Louises: the Louis who made it, the Louis who died in it, the Louis who lost it, and who, all three, left material enough

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for the "Meditations" of generations of philosophers like Thackeray. But if you cycle there on a sunshiny May day, when the gardens of Le Nôtre and the park are sweet with the sweetness of spring, nothing will seem so out of place in such an Armida-Palace as philosophy. Nor will you have the heart to share De Musset's cynicism and find it hackneyed.

Upon the splendor and elegance of Versailles, upon its admirably composed landscapes, Corot seems deliberately, almost ostentatiously, to have turned his back by settling only five kilometres away at simple Ville d'Avray. To wheel to Ville d'Avray is to get very nearly back into Paris, to transform the circle into a preposterously irregular ellipse, but you cannot leave it out. Corot has absorbed the interest of this pretty suburb, and everywhere you see his sunlit lakes and wooded banks, his little boats among the reeds, his hills of mist upon the horizon. Here, on the outskirts of the busiest capital in Europe, he has created an enchanted land. Having gone so far, it would be a mistake not to ride five kilometres still nearer Paris to St. Cloud, for the sake of Napoleon and the view from the terrace. I hesitate as I put it down on my imaginary circle—the cyclist's *ceinture*—for to me St. Cloud has always meant the joyful escape from the *salons* and writing about them; the cool journey by boat down the Seine in the warm May afternoon; the aimless ramble through the park, upon which, in the perfect French springtime, even the ruined palace fails to cast the terrible shadow of 1870; the gay dinner in the restaurant on the river-bank, at the hour when the Seine and its shores fade into the gray twilight Cazin paints. Why is it that the simplest excursion from Paris seems gayer than the most extravagant picnic from any other town?

Not many kilometres farther on is Rueil, and the tombs of Josephine and Hortense, with Malmaison, where I have never yet been, but a short distance beyond. If Marie Antoinette is the royal heroine at Versailles, Josephine is the imperial victim at Malmaison. And yet, so strange is the power of association, that the name carries me back, not to the magnificent France of the Consulate and the Empire, but to a tranquil convent garden a short half hour from Philadelphia, where the dearest little French nun who ever lived trained her Malmaison roses about the statue of the Madonna under the fir-tree. Marly is the next link in the royal chain of palaces, and on the way you pass Bougival, where it would be hard to say how many *Salon* pictures have been painted, and where, by the Château de Buzenval, one cruel day, Henri Regnault was killed and all his promised masterpieces perished with him, and where the war monuments will not let you forget the Prussians and 1870.

Marly you visit more for what was there under the *Grand Monarque*

than for what is—for that palace courtiers strove and struggled to be invited to, though once in it, they had to learn to be silent, according to the Duchesse d' Orleans, who had no gift for silence, and were bored to death, according to Madame de Maintenon, who ruled over it: *la funeste Marly* to Louis and the banished English queen, wandering together sadly in its gardens and weeping over the bitterness of Death, that spared the aged like themselves and swept away the young. Not much left of it or the Forest now, but enough to fill a gap in the vista of royal residences that was uninterrupted when Carlyle's "draggled Mænads" looked down upon it from the last hill-top on the march to Versailles.

St. Germain-en-Laye came into that vista, and St. Germain is only four kilometres from Marly. How did the kings manage to live in all these palaces, separated one from the other by not much more than an afternoon's drive? St. Germain is certainly one of the most charming. You can spend a long day in the Forest without attempting to go anywhere in particular, riding up and down its leafy woods. Each of these Forests, so close to Paris, has a distinct character of its own: Vincennes, cheerful and cockney; Fontainebleau, wild as Brocéhau; but St. Germain, when carpeted with pale spring blossoms and green with the first tender growth of the Maytime, more like the "Wood near Athens" where Titania and her Fairies held their revels. Louis XIV. objected to St. Germain—it was before that sad day at Marly—because from the terrace of the château the white spire of St. Denis, the abbey of the royal tombs, was visible, reminding him that whatever he could do, he could not live any longer than any one else: a fact so mortifying that to forget it he built Versailles and turned a wilderness into a garden.

Here again, as at Fontainebleau, there is the difficulty of deciding where to go next. The easy route, that has already lost all semblance of a circle, might be made to follow the Seine down to Mantes, the picturesque town with the towers and bridge Daubigny painted; it might return almost to Paris, to St. Denis and the abbey and the tombs Louis could not evade as successfully as the white spire. But my own choice is for a quite irrelevant flight northward to Compiègne, passing by Chantilly and Senlis. At Chantilly, as everybody knows, is the château presented to France by the Duc d' Aumale, and now a public museum. When I was last there, three years ago, the museum had not been opened, and I saw the château only from the outside. As a building, I thought it less impressive than the wonderful stables where the horses were housed as royally as their masters. The ride through the Forest of Chantilly, along narrow paths walled with green, is one of the loveliest I have ever taken anywhere. But I hardly like to recommend the rest of my route to Senlis, for it went over the worst *pavé* I can remember, with

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a mud road at one side, along which I rode for what seemed an eternity in a deep, narrow rut. I cannot impress it upon you too often that all about Paris you must be careful to consult the road-books and maps in order to avoid these paved highways. There are often by-roads, a little longer, that can be followed instead; in some cases there are ridable paths alongside of the paving, and the studying out the best route can help to fill the idle evening in the *café*. Senlis, a city on a hill, with old churches and ruins and a fine avenue of trees, is worth the trouble.

Compiègne has innumerable memories of those Merovingian kings who were the torment of my schooldays, and a palace built by Louis XV., of a respectable age in our eyes, but a modern upstart compared to the older château where Clovis lived. Stevenson stopped a night at Compiègne on his "Inland Voyage." It was the big town on the Oise, with the bustling hotel, where nobody observed the presence of the two canoeists who had been such heroes on the upper river, and where a great packet of letters brought their journey practically to an end. The sun was going down as he arrived in the evening; he was up before the town in the morning, so short was his stay. And yet, somehow, it is of Stevenson one thinks at Compiègne a great deal more than of Clovis, or Philippe-Auguste, or Jeanne d' Arc, or Napoleon, or the other people in history. A beautiful book, like a beautiful picture, has a charm that outweighs any number of interesting facts. Loving France as I do, I am grateful to Stevenson for having felt and expressed its charm in memorable words. It is strange how few English writers have cared for France, though they have fallen upon Italy like a hungry swarm of locusts. But Thackeray loved its dinners and Ruskin its scenery, and said so in one or two haunting passages of his "Modern Painters" and "Præterita." Mr. James has told us of his "Little Tours" with an enthusiasm that is catching, and Pater has thrilled us with the glory of Chartres and the beauty of the endless stretches of La Beauce and the windings of the Loire. And there are others, but still not many, compared to the multitude who have printed their praise of Italy. Even Ruskin never tried to bully people into seeing the graces and distinction of French landscape, as he bullied them into the correct emotions before the "Stones of Venice" and the pictures of Florence.

Not much bullying, surely, is needed when from Compiègne you ride through the Forest, over twelve kilometres of good road, to Pierrefonds. The traveller by train thinks France the barest, most sparsely wooded country of Europe. And yet you cannot encircle Paris on your bicycle, never going more than fifty kilometres away, without passing from one wood into another. This is the beauty of the route I am blocking out so broadly. The early kings, whose mission I once

From the Persian of Kamal Uddin Ismael 783

supposed was to torment me, were very busy about here, and you can turn off the straight road more than once to see the ruins of the abbeys they founded. But everything pales in interest before Pierrefonds. It has been restored, it is almost as brand-new as Carcassonne, and I, for my part, prefer ruin to restoration. But Viollet-le-Duc did his work well, and the building keeps its place in the landscape. Like Carcassonne, like Mont St. Michel, like Rocamandour, like Aigues-Mortes, it is as mediæval as you could wish. It looks for all the world like the castles out of a primitive picture, and, really, I do not know why we should be so surprised to find that the world remains pictorial, though the painter has learned to draw in perspective!

From Pierrefonds the Forest of Villers-Cotterets is not far, and then my idea would be to make, more or less directly, for Meaux. It is a delightful town on the Marne, with a cathedral, and if you feel overpowered by the solemn memory of Bossuet's "Sermons," you can open your Froissart and read about the gay doings here of Gaston de Foix, the central figure, if there is one, of the "Chronicles."

And, having got to Meaux, there can be no doubt as to the rest of your route. The Valley of the Marne settles the question. Now keeping with the river, now leaving it when it takes its wide, unreasonable détours,—as if you had never done anything of the kind yourself,—you reach that part of the valley which the Prussians left a desert in 1870, and which the Parisians have restored to its old pink-and-white villadom. And so,—touching at the Forest of Bondy, in remembrance of Madame de Sévigné, who made a retreat one Holy Week at Livry, determined, as she wrote to her daughter, to fast much for many reasons; and also at Nogent, with a thought for Watteau—you come by the river to Charenton again, and the Bois de Vincennes, the emotional streets of Paris, and the noise and the crowds of the Exposition.

And I do not think you can complete the circle without feeling just a little glad that I was generous enough to offer you so enchanting a route, and that you were sensible enough to profit by it.



FROM THE PERSIAN OF KAMAL UDDIN ISMAEL

BY THEODOSIA GARRISON

O H, jasmine-faced, sweet Turkish slave of mine,
When Allah made that mouth and waist of thine,
Sure, waists that year were scarce in Turkestan,
And scarce the little mouths, blood-red as wine.

THE AVENGING ANGEL

By Mrs. J. K. Hudson

FIFTH IN THE SERIES OF "MORMON STORIES" BEGUN IN THE JANUARY NUMBER



MRS. LINDSAY sat inside a pretty lace-curtained window one day, looking out upon a shaded street of the most peculiar city of the United States—Salt Lake. She belonged to a Scottish family, who spelled their name with a final "s-a-y," if you please, and had barely a speaking acquaintance with the plain "s-y"s or the "s-e-y"s.

As she sat there in this strange city, the tuning of a violin reached her ear, followed by a bar or two of notes from the air of "Bonny Doon." The sound was faint and uncertain, and she could not place it, though she knew that it must be near by. It set her to soliloquizing upon the cosmopolitan character of the people of the community in which she was sojourning—the English and German and Scotch, and especially the extensive Scandinavian settlements. But she remembered with gratification how often she had been told that the proselyting of the Mormon missionaries was carried on almost wholly among the ignorant and peasant classes of the old countries. This must be true, she was very sure, and she was quite safe in concluding that no Lindsays had been called to Zion.

Across the street, a little towards the east, was a smart, new building, set up unbecomingly in the midst of the old homes, and occupied by a funeral director and his grewsome commodities.

Mrs. Lindsay could just see over the top of the hedge into the doorway of this establishment. It was a Sabbath afternoon, and few persons were abroad. Presently she noticed that people were coming along the street, one and two and three at a time, and passing into the undertaker's. Not a great concourse of people, but at least a score, thus appeared and were lost to view in the mysterious place. Then a few scattering carriages of the poorer class drew up in the shade of the poplars and stopped. The horses hung their tired heads as if they knew from experience about how long a nap they might take, and the drivers on their high seats crossed their legs and pulled down their hats, crumpled themselves into restful positions, and settled back for a nap too. All these signs of a poor man's funeral were observed by Mrs. Lindsay behind her curtain, and she was saying to herself, rather in-

differently, "Poor fellow!" meaning the one in the coffin, when softly floating from the undertaker's door came "Bonny Doon," this time in prolonged cadences. The instrument that voiced the music was weak and uncertainly handled, that much was plainly evident, though she could not see the player, and the trembling air seemed to come from the inner sanctuary of the establishment. Following "Bonny Doon" came the "Blue Bells of Scotland," "Highland Mary," and then, with the accompaniment of a sadly broken voice,

"Flow gently, sweet Afton, along thy green banks."

For an instant Mrs. Lindsay did not distinguish that the voice came from her own side of the street. It was so fine and faint and unexpected that it almost blended with the violin, until a specially discordant note, apparently choked by tears, set the two strains apart. Looking out, Mrs. Lindsay saw the shrinking figure of a little old woman under the poplar-trees. Slowly and almost painfully the woman walked along in the shadows, glancing furtively across the street, and halting with uncertain step. Two or three times she started to the opposite side, but as often hesitated and turned back. Suddenly, as Mrs. Lindsay watched, she saw the woman stretch forth her hand as if involuntarily feeling for support, and in another instant she stepped back and leaned against the bole of one of the great trees, pressing her hand to her heart. Her sympathies could bear no more, and Mrs. Lindsay hurried out.

"What is the matter, my dear woman?" she exclaimed, putting her hand on the thin, black-sleeved arm at the same time. "Can I assist you? I was afraid you were going to fall."

"It is my husband!" the woman said in a hurried whisper. "They are going to bury him. I wanted so much to see his face once more. I thought I would go, but I have not the courage. My feet will not carry me. I cannot go in there alone. Perhaps they would not let me. But he is my husband. We were married in the old country, and he came over here to please me. There! The music has stopped. They are going to bury him. Oh, I must see him. Come with me; it is but a little way. They will let you in, and then I can go too."

Mrs. Lindsay's feelings overcame any hesitation she might have felt, and she offered her arm, hurrying over to the open door as fast as the weak woman could go. A clergyman not of the Church of Mormon was offering a brief prayer when they reached the threshold. They paused until he pronounced his "Amen," and then Mrs. Lindsay raised her hand to detain the undertaker, who stepped briskly forward to close the coffin. He comprehended, and stood aside for the small figure to approach. No other mourners were near the low bier that held the silent form, and Mrs. Lindsay and her companion stood beside it alone.

Suddenly the little woman let go her support and fell forward on the coffin.

"Oh, Jamie!" she cried. "It was your music and your violin. It called me; I could not stay away. I should know its voice in any place. Where have you been so long, Jamie? Why did you stay away? Oh, take me with you now. Let me stay, oh, please let me stay, will you not?" she said, looking up and addressing the company generally, but resting her glance finally on the undertaker. He transferred her appeal, by a hasty look, to the clergyman, whereupon that individual came forward with a kindly air and took her hand.

"It will be impossible to delay the funeral, my dear woman, but you can go to the burial-ground if you desire. You and your friend can take the carriage together, and I will ride with the undertaker. He was your husband, you say? Strange, that I did not know Jamie had a wife. I have known him a long time,—but then he never talked of himself. I am sorry, but we will have to say our last farewell to him now."

When the parting was over, the minister would have assisted the suffering woman to the carriage, but she declined to go.

"I cannot see him again, and——" At this her lamentations burst forth again.

"Oh, Jamie! don't you know me now? Don't you know it's Leah, your Leah? For so many years he was not himself," she said, lifting her tear-wet face to the clergyman, "but I always prayed that the time might come when he would remember me and come back. But it's too late! too late! I am not worthy to accept even this last sad comfort. I am trying to wash away my sins. Oh, if I can save him too, that will be more than all."

Wiping her eyes and looking up to the undertaker again, she said,—

"I am a worker in the Temple, you know."

"Yes, I know you, Sister Leah, and I am sorry that we have to be moving along. I think it will rain soon."

But it was evident that the woman had something more to say, for instead of going at once after his polite warning, she turned to the seated company of men who had come to pay their respects to Jamie, the Scotchman, and said hesitatingly,—

"May I have the violin?"

"Yes, indeed, it is yours," responded several voices, yet all hesitated to pick it up and offer it to her, feeling that none had an individual right to present it. But the old man who had played the Scottish airs took it upon himself to hand it over with a courtly bow. His willingness to do so was explained by the motion he made immediately afterwards, when he reached under the table beside which he had been sitting and brought out a violin that was evidently his very own, for

he drew his hand affectionately along the side of it, as if smoothing out any strains that might have become tangled, and contemplated its perfections.

The woman gathered her violin to her heart, and with a faint "Thank you" to the assemblage, left the house.

At the door she bade Mrs. Lindsay a hurried farewell, saying she must go to the Temple at once. Mrs. Lindsay understood that it was to perform a ceremony for the happiness of her husband's soul in the world to which she believed he had gone that the woman hastened away, apparently having been given new strength.

Mrs. Lindsay went back to her window and watched the small funeral procession pass down the street. But the strange scenes of the morning did not go out of her mind when the actors disappeared from view. She thought many times of the woman and the dead man, and wondered what had separated them, and what had brought them together again as she saw them, one in his last, long sleep, and the other almost as oblivious to the affairs of this world as he.

Late the next day Mrs. Lindsay answered a timid knock at her door, and found the worker in the Temple standing before her.

"I am sure I did not thank you as I should," she began at once, "I was in such haste to get back to the Temple. I tried so hard to save him in life, but he was not content to be one of the Lord's people. I cannot blame him, either, but it all makes it more necessary for me to work for him now. You cannot understand, ma'am, and sometimes I cannot myself, for it seems to me that I suffered as much as he, but I never left the church, and so I hope to reclaim him. And yet, they say, there is no redemption for any man who dies in his sins as he did, defying the church and denying the power of the Prophet and the apostles. But I have been baptized for him, and I will do everything I can. He had a good, kind heart, but he lost all faith in the Church of Jesus Christ. He used to say that if there were any latter-day saints he had never seen them. Oh, it was dreadful, and so many good men in the church. He had a great deal to discourage him, poor man, —but pardon me, I must be going. I only came back to thank you; I do not want to trouble you."

"No, no, do not go. Come in and rest and calm yourself," insisted Mrs. Lindsay. "I would so like to hear your story. Sit down and tell it to me, will you not? You were married in the old country?" she added, making sure to touch a chord that would vibrate the whole length of the poor woman's life.

"Yes, ma'am, away in the farthest corner of it, in Caithness, near by to Wick, where we heard the breakers every day and all night, when with pleasure or sorrow we chanced to be awake. And, oh, my man, he missed the sound of them so when we came over here. He said it

seemed as if the sea had stopped. Once we were out by the lake when a storm came up, and my husband watched the water with hungry eyes, but he said it was like a toy compared with the North Sea. And in the summer-time, when the hot sun poured down on the valley and burned up every growing thing, he would come home and shut himself in a room and walk the floor. He said he must see the rocks and the breaking water. Once he had a fever, and he talked all the time of the sea. 'There it comes,' he would say. 'See, the surf! the surf! Let me get into it!' and I had not the strength to keep him in bed. He would totter a few steps and then sink down on the floor, waiting for the water to reach him. Sometimes he imagined that it did roll over him, and then he would fall back unconscious, and the children and I would get him to bed as best we could. Oh, ma'am, it is dreadful to be away from the sea when you have been bred beside it, and heard it singing in your ears from the time you were a baby till you were grown up and heard it along with your wedding-bells. Never a man suffered more of lonesomeness for it than my man."

"And you? Did you not long for the sea too?" asked Mrs. Lindsay.

"Yes, ma'am, I missed it sorely, but there were worse troubles for me. I could have got along without the sea if Jamie had not grieved so, and if it had been all right between us. And it would have been all right with us, Brother Brigham said, if we had understood our religion. There are many things that we did not learn in the old country. Jamie always said they were not told us, but Brother Brigham said we were heedless, and I know it must have been so. We were young then, and thought mainly of ourselves and each other. Oh, what a happy time that was. I often wonder now if it could have been all wrong and wicked.

"We had only been here a week when one of the apostles came to see me and told me that he wished to counsel me for my own good, and for the honor and future exaltation of my children. I was ready and willing to do anything. I believed in my religion, and was anxious to show my devotion to it at once, even after the long and tiresome voyage and the sacrifices we had made in leaving all our friends in the old country. I was converted first, and it was because I wished it that Jamie promised the Mormon missionary to bring me to Zion. I was pleased that the church should send one of the Twelve to see me so soon after our arrival, and gladly promised to do anything in my power. He then explained that I was really not married to James. That is, not married in the church. He said that when James entered the celestial marriage state, as he must in order to live his religion and sustain his position in the church, the new wife would stand above me. I mean, that the woman first sealed to a man in the Temple ranks

as his first wife, unless the wife who was married out of the Mormon church consents to be sealed to her husband in the church according to the rites of the Mormon religion. It made me very indignant and bitterly rebellious to be told this. I said that my marriage to Jamie in the old country was good enough for me. We brought the certificate with us, and it was recorded in the old kirk register the same as my own mother's, and nothing could undo it. But when I refused to go through the Temple and be married over again, I was told that a Gentile marriage was only for time, while if I were sealed to my husband I would be married for eternity as well. This was a great inducement to me, but still not enough to make me seriously doubt my marriage to James, and I was still rebellious. Then my husband told me that if I refused to go he could not compel me, but that he would be obliged to go through the Temple at once, and to take another wife in my place. He said that he had been informed before that this privilege would be accorded him, and he realized the importance of accepting the invitation. If it were delayed much longer, he believed that he would be expected to take a second wife at the same time that he was sealed to me, but by prompt action he might avoid that. What hurt me more than all else was to be told that my children were not legitimate, because I had never been sealed to my husband in the Mormon church. That almost made me doubt the religion of the Saints, and I was, if possible, more indignant than ever. But when my husband explained to me that the only way to give our children standing in the church was to adopt them after we had been initiated into the mysteries of celestial marriage, I consented. Of course, he knew that I would do anything for our children's sake, but I have always thought he was ashamed to speak of the little fellows in that way, and so kept them for the last argument. To think of adopting our own children! Oh, it was dreadful—dreadful! It seemed an insult to them as well as to me. But we went through with it all, and I tried to feel that it was right, and that we were just the same as before. Of course, I should have felt that we were all a great deal better, having been sanctified and purified by passing through the Temple, but somehow I could not, and I suppose I have been punished for it, for our troubles only began instead of ending with that day. I cannot tell you anything of the ceremonies in the Temple, you know, for we all took a fearful oath never to divulge the secrets that are imparted to us there, and death is the penalty for breaking the oath. But I will tell you that my husband declined to take another wife on the same day that we were sealed to each other, though he was counselled to do so. He felt that the counsel was intended as a punishment for me, because of my obstinacy, and he insisted on the ceremonies all being performed for us alone, and upon the children being brought into the kingdom by adoption at once.

Then I thought we were entitled to be happy in our own way and with each other, but my husband said that he could concede nothing more to me, and hoped I would not be unreasonable. The celestial marriage state was not complete without plural marriage, and my next duty was to select a companion for my husband, and invite her to become a member of our family. Even after all these years it seems strange that I can talk of it. But no woman knows what her heart can bear without breaking until the burden is put upon her. I did not know of any woman to whom I could extend such an invitation, and told my husband that if he had decided to take a plural wife it did not matter to me who she might be. He said then that the trouble would be easily solved, for it had already been revealed to Brother Brigham that Sister Martha was the companion he should choose. As soon as he said this I realized that it did matter to me very seriously who should be brought into our household. Sister Martha was one of my intimate new friends. We had travelled with her and had learned to think a great deal of her. She had been very kind to me and to the children, and was deeply pious; but I was not ready to share my place as a wife with her because of these reasons. The sisters, and the Elders who visited me, said that I was not made for a saint, and I suppose that must be true, for I never did become reconciled to the celestial marriage system in my own home. From having been the best of friends, Sister Martha and I became the bitterest enemies. I suspected her of trying to win my own children away from me. My husband did turn against me, and told me I was selfish and unjust and false to my religion. I don't know how I lived through it all, but I think it was because I learned to see clearly how unimportant this life is, after all. It is only in the world to come that a woman can be really happy, and she can only attain happiness there by bearing burdens and making sacrifices in this. There is no salvation, no reward, no glory for her there if she is not humble and obedient here."

The woman raised her voice and unconsciously assumed the tone of the experience meeting in repeating these trite Mormon sayings, and would doubtless have gone on at length in the same strain if Mrs. Lindsay had not interrupted her by asking if her husband and Sister Martha were really married.

"Oh, yes, they were sealed to each other for time and eternity. We were very poor, and sometimes in the stress of poverty we forgot all other feelings and shared generously with each other what little we had, but mostly there were jealousies and quarrels and upbraidings that kept us all miserably unhappy.

"The worst came when James returned from a church meeting one night and said that he had joined the Danites. I could not believe it to be true at first, for we had heard a good deal of the doings of that

organization, and I could not think that he would willingly associate himself with it. When I said so, he told us that he had been counselled to join without delay. We all knew what that meant, and nothing more was said of it. But from that time I could see that my husband was growing melancholy, and he was often moody and absent-minded. His business was neglected, and he was frequently called away from home. We never dared ask him where he was going nor when he would return. When he came home he was always tired and depressed. One day he did not come to supper, and I grew very anxious. About dusk I made an excuse to go to the Z. C. M. I. to buy some matches. I suppose you have been here long enough, ma'am, to know that this is the big Mormon store, Zion's Coöperative Mercantile Institution, generally known by the four letters. I thought I might chance to hear something that would relieve my mind.

"Nearly everybody had gone from the store when I got there, and I was about to leave, after having secured my matches, when I noticed a man that I took to be a commercial traveller saying good-by to Brother H., who was one of the head men there. I stopped beside a pile of calico to wait until the stranger had gone out, thinking that Brother H. might feel that I was in the way if I passed them at the door. Just as I stood still, somewhat in the shadow, and glanced out through the open door, I saw my husband walking rapidly along the opposite side of the street. I involuntarily took a step or two forward to see if there were any one in front of him, or to discover, if I could, what was the cause of his haste. I saw a few rods before him a man walking leisurely up the street in the direction of Temple Block. In another instant the stranger in the store had said good-by and stepped outside the door, but something held me back. Brother H. kept his position at the door, and I watched my husband with straining eyes. It was so dark that I could not make out whether the man in front was anyone I knew or not, and I was only able to recognize my husband by his form. In a moment more he overtook the man and struck him suddenly from behind. I could not actually see the blow, but I knew from the way the man dropped that he had been stunned with a noiseless stroke on the back of the neck. I had heard of such things, and realized the instant I saw the man fall that I had been expecting it. There was no noise, no scuffle or commotion of any kind, but the sudden halting of my husband's hurrying feet attracted the attention of the commercial traveller, and he looked across the street in time to see the man fall, if he did not see the blow. He hesitated an instant, and then started to run over to the fallen man. At this, Brother H. called out to him in a quick and stern voice, 'Come back! Come here, come here!'

"There was no mistaking the meaning of the call, and the stranger turned and hurried back to the door of the Z. C. M. I. Brother H.

took him by the arm and walked quickly towards the rear of the store. He spoke in a low tone, and his voice was trembling with excitement, but I could hear him say, as they passed near me on the other side of the high stack of calico, 'You did not see that. You did not see anything.'

"I realized at once that if it were not wise for the stranger to see anything, it would be still less wise for me to see, or know of, the tragedy that had just taken place. The door-way was vacant, and I hurried out into the rapidly gathering darkness. Between me and the group on the other side of the street a cart that came hurriedly round the nearest corner stopped close up to the sidewalk. There was scarcely time for any one to step into it, it seemed to me, when it moved on. I could not distinguish the number of forms in the vehicle, but there was nothing left on the sidewalk.

"That was a long and anxious night for me. I could not tell my secret nor my fears to any one. I knew that my only safety lay in absolute silence. I suppose that Sister Martha was fearful of trouble too, for I know that she passed a restless night. I heard her sigh many times as I lay awake listening for the least sound of my husband's coming. But I never could fancy her feeling towards James just as I did, though I suppose she looked upon him as her husband. Towards morning she was sleeping soundly, and then I went quietly out-doors and listened. Before long I heard his step, and recognized it, though it was unsteady. When he came close and saw me at the door, he started a little, though he knew me even in the starlight. I put out my hand to him, and he gasped my name in a strange, whispering sound, and took me in his arms. Neither of us said a word, but I felt two or three big hot tears fall on my neck. Then we went into the house together. James went to the little room that he so often occupied after these mysterious nights, and turned the key in the door. I heard him pace the floor until daylight began to turn everything gray. Then his footsteps ceased, and I feared, I cannot tell what dreadful things. But I listened at the door, and after a while heard the heavy breathing of sleep. I must have fallen asleep myself for a few minutes then, for the next thing I heard was Sister Martha inquiring for Jamie. We two women spent that day together listening at the door of the little room, and often trying to open it. But it was always locked, and nearly all the time we could hear Jamie's heavy breathing. It was the middle of the afternoon before he came out, and then he looked haggard and unnatural. Indeed, ma'am, it was a week before he was like himself again. After that he was often gone a day or a night. No explanation was ever made of his absence, but he always came home with the same worried, absent-minded look on his face. Many a night he walked the floor of the little room for hours, repeating in a loud voice, 'I am an

Avenging Angel! I am doing the Lord's work! The Avenging Angels are appointed by God Almighty!

"At other times he would cry like a child, and my heart would ache for him. Once, when I begged to go in, he unlocked the door and drew me to him with an eager look in his eyes, as if he would search my heart to see if I could be trusted. But he pushed me from him, saying, 'I must not tell you; it is your only protection. Go out! go out! I might tell you,' and he pushed me almost savagely from the room and locked the door again. But I knew it was not because he could not trust me. It was for my sake. Oh, that was a dreadful time. Another night Sister Martha and I heard him talking in his sleep. He gave a horrible shriek, as if he saw some terrible sight, and then he said over and over in a loud tone, 'He is not dead! I tell you he is not dead! I saw him move; he is not dead!'

"What it all meant we could not make out, but the horror in his voice made my very blood cold, and I could think of nothing but that some one had been buried alive. Finally there came a time when Jamie was gone several days. He had not said a word to me or to Sister Martha about going any place, and after the first night we were so frightened we could not sleep. Every hour of day and night I was listening for the least sound on the street, and starting with fear if anyone approached our house. I had learned that it was not safe to make any inquiries or to show any anxiety for my husband, and the only thing to do was to stay at home, away from my friends and acquaintances, and especially out of sight of Brother Brigham and the apostles. One of our elders lived near us, and I was afraid all the time that he would come in, but he never did until long after it was all over.

"No, ma'am, Jamie did not come home. At least, not for months after that. But it was not many days until we began to hear rumors that a large band of emigrants had been waylaid and robbed and murdered out on the plains, more than a hundred. The stories about it were very indefinite and contradictory at first, and the papers denied it all and said there was not a word of truth in it; and it was announced in the Tabernacle that it was all a villainous Gentile lie—and maybe it was. I won't say, for I don't know. But gradually we found out that a terrible battle had taken place, and that all the emigrants were killed. Brother Brigham had made an order that no emigrants should pass through Zion, and many people thought they had been killed by the Avenging Angels, who were sworn to carry out the orders of Brother Brigham, whatever they might be. But the Mormon people say that the Indians killed the emigrants at Mountain Meadow. Maybe they did; everybody knows they were capable of it. For my part, I never should have had any doubt of it if it had not been for Jamie. As I said, it was nearly three months before he came home, and I had given

him up for dead, when one day he opened the door and walked in. I saw at a glance that he was not himself. His eyes had a wild, scared look in them that was awful to see. He came up close to me and whispered, "Where's Leah?" He did not know me. When I told him that I was Leah, his wife, and begged him to sit down and rest and eat something, he said that I was trying to deceive him, like everybody else. I could not persuade him to stay more than a few minutes, and I dared not follow him when he went away.

"I was told that night by a friend that Jamie had been counselled to leave town, and he must have had understanding enough left to know what that meant, for he was not seen in Salt Lake again for a long time. Occasionally I would hear of him from someone who had been out in the mountains, where he was wandering about, I suppose, living as he could, for nobody ever saw him twice in the same place, nor heard him speak more than a few words. He seemed to recognize the men he had known in Salt Lake, they said, because he never stayed where they were. Just as soon as he saw any one he knew he would slip away and disappear, nobody knew where. He came home once very sick, and I nursed him for a few days, but he never called me by name, or seemed to know where he was. The only comfort I had was that once in a while he asked for me. I almost wished that he would die, for I knew that he had some terrible secret on his mind that would never give him any peace in this world. But one day he got to talking to himself, saying over the awful things I had heard him say many a time in his sleep, and worse too, and nothing could hold him. He trembled so he could hardly stand, but still it was his fear that gave him strength to get up. He thought the Danites were after him, and started off towards the cañon almost on a run, weak as he was. I never saw him but once after that until I saw him in his coffin. Poor Jamie—and yet, he is the fortunate one to-day.

"Thank you, ma'am, many, many times. You have been very kind to me. You know I am a worker in the Temple, and I must go. I have been away a long time.

"What was my husband's name, did you ask? Oh, I thought you knew. I mean, I thought I had told you. His name was Lindsay, ma'am,—James Lindsay,—and he was that proud of it, no man knows, for he spelled it L-i-n-d-s-a-y. And what might your name be, ma'am? I haven't asked you, but I would like to know, you have been so kind to me."

"My name is Lindsay too," faltered the lady who but yesterday sat behind her lace-curtained window and watched with indifferent eyes the gathering of the mourners at the funeral of crazy Scotch Jamie, the Avenging Angel.

AT NIGHTFALL

By George Gissing

Author of "In the Year of the Jubilee," "Eve's Ransom"



THE sick man had lain still for several hours: an ominous stillness, understood as such by the nurse, who moved silently about her duties, occasionally speaking low with someone at the door. The light of a close-shaded lamp fell upon the corner table covered with sick-room appliances, but as yet it was only afternoon—the afternoon of an autumn day in London, cold, gray, turbid; the bedroom window, high above the neighboring houses, framed a space of sullen cloud.

In the flat beneath, a hostess was entertaining. There sounded a piano and a singing voice.

The nurse looked at her watch and compared it with the clock on the mantle-piece. Then the door softly opened, and an elderly man, the expected doctor, came in. His visit lasted only for five minutes; he asked about as many questions. When he was gone the nurse seated herself by the fireside and in its light glanced over a newspaper.

"Is it evening or morning?" was spoken in a clear but faint voice.

She rose and approached the bed.

"Evening. Nearly half-past five."

"And the morning and the evening were the—last day."

The man murmured it to himself, smiling a little. He seemed to be about fifty years old. A face much shrunk; eyes with the look of long pain; mouth relaxed from the half-sullen energy which had been its wonted character. Resignation, self-abandonment, spoke in the changed features, and in the voice a mildness strange to it before.

"Do the servants wait upon you properly?" he inquired, after gazing half absently at the nurse's face.

"Very well indeed."

"Good girls. If I haven't another chance, tell Moreland to pay them well. Give them enough to let them take a good holiday. You won't forget?"

He closed his eyes, and kept them closed whilst answering the inquiries about his feelings which the nurse put to him.

"I'm quite clear-headed, but seem to be all head. You can hear me? I seem to myself to speak indistinctly. The old cotton-wool feeling in the ears. Legs gone—simply gone."

He kept silence for some moments.

"What's the world doing? Any news?"

His voice was stronger, with a note of the old irony. The nurse told him briefly what the newspaper contained.

"Anyone dead?" he asked, again smiling.

"No one in particular, I think. Some millionaire. Yes, Mr. Clifford Bates——"

She was stopped by a movement of her listener. He had thrown up both his arms and raised himself from the pillow, but in the same moment fell heavily back. His face was deeply flushed, his mouth quivered; upon the outside of the bedclothes his hands clutched and struggled. The nurse believed that the end was coming; she had been prepared for some such paroxysm as this. But the eyes that were fixed upon her kept the light of life; a new and wonderful vitality appeared on the haggard features. One or two efforts to speak were unavailing; at length his voice became intelligible.

"How? Where?"

"Thrown from his horse."

"Dead? Not only injured?"

"Killed."

He breathed quickly and irregularly. Again his hands were thrown up, but more feebly. He turned his head this way and that, as if endeavoring to raise it. When the nurse exerted herself to tranquillize him, he kept his look steadily upon her, and the expression in his eyes grew to one of passionate entreaty.

"What chance have I?" he asked in a whisper,—“any? Is there one in ten thousand?"

"You mustn't excite yourself——"

"I know. I'm getting quiet. Is there a shadow of hope?"

The nurse answered only by gently sponging his forehead and hands. He took the silence as it was meant, let his eyelids fall, and seemed to relapse into the comatose condition in which he had spent half the day.

After a long look at him the nurse turned away with a suppressed sigh. She was a woman of kind and comely face, still young; the best type of nurse,—professional aptitude and gentle manners combining in her to make an ideal attendant upon the sick. Presently she glanced again at the newspaper, wishing to re-read the paragraph which had so strong an interest for her patient. The rustle caused the dying man to open his eyes again, and again he gazed hard at the woman's face, now visible by lamplight.

"Come and sit by me."

At once she did so.

"It always has to be a woman," pursued the unsteady voice. "I could always tell a woman anything—men nothing. You know the world; you see a great deal, of course; one can talk to a woman like you."

"If it will ease your mind."

"Good God! But that'll come soon, as you know. We all have our minds put at rest, sooner or later."

He tried to laugh, and it ended in a sob-like choking.

"She is nearly forty,—ten years younger than I, and ten years since we met, and seven since she lived alone."

"Who are you speaking of?" asked the listener gently.

"Of his wife—that fellow's that dead. Is he really dead? Then she will come back at once. I suppose they have cabled to her. She went to India three years ago. I am glad she won't see me. I have one more day, perhaps. It will be an old story by when she gets home. I want you to promise that you'll find her, when she comes back, and tell her something from me. It'll be easy enough. Moreland will let you know her address; I can't give the message to him. From you it'll come naturally when you've explained."

The nurse promised to do his bidding. But a minute or two passed before he again broke silence. His features reflected the working of his mind, a tumult of thoughts and passion.

"You're not unlike her," he resumed abruptly. "The same type of woman, I mean. I've known the other kind mostly. You have a faith of some kind, haven't you? I mean a real working faith—something you live by?"

"Something I try to live by."

"Yes. I know the look. I've watched you when you thought I didn't. Don't tell her about the bad time I've had; not a word of that, mind. Make her believe it was short and effectual. And then just say this: Say I came round to her way of thinking—that she was right, and I knew it at last. You understand?"

He struggled so hard to raise himself, in the desire to emphasize what he was saying, that the nurse helped him into another position. She tried by assurances that his message should be faithfully delivered to soothe the agitation which grew upon him.

"She was right," he repeated after a few inarticulate murmurs. "But I wasn't wrong. I meant it with all the life that was in me—I meant it!"

"Rest a little now," said the nurse, "and tell me more presently."

He looked a scornful impatience, a flash of the man that had been.

"What's the good of dribbling out another hour of life? It's all over; the time has come. When I was a strong, healthy brute, and

something came that I'd been waiting for, I used to say, 'Death will come too.' I always had that thought—something amiss in me, I suppose—even when I seemed healthy. It made me mad to get the most out of life. If you had known me a year ago, you'd have understood what it meant to me—to love that woman as I did. And as I do—as I do!"

The nurse touched his hand, a touch all kind and womanly.

"Thank you. I never cared a hang for a man's sympathy; but a woman's—and the right kind of a woman. Now I'll tell you all about it. You're the sort of woman a man can talk to about a man's life. Do you know anything about that fellow that's dead? Good God! to be *her* husband, and yet a mean, drivelling skunk. How was it possible? He liked someone else better. No harm in that: he couldn't help it. He wanted a child too, and she had none. What was the honest thing to do? He had only to say good-bye to her and live openly with the other woman; then, if she wished, she could most likely have got a divorce. But he wouldn't. He was afraid of the scandal; he wanted to keep in with society, and when she left him he lied about it—about *her*! We know the kind of woman who would have spared him the need of lying. Plenty such nowadays, and a rare good sort too. But *she* didn't see it like that!"

"She left him openly?"

"Just went quietly away, to live on her own little income among her own friends. Not the woman to make a fuss and call out for people to pity her. Fools said she had married him for his money; it didn't look like it, after all. Not the first woman who has made a mistake. I don't pretend to know what he looked like to her when she accepted him. We can't take the woman's point of view about another man. Why, I dare say anyone would find it hard enough to understand how she came to care for *me*!"

"When?"

"Long enough after their parting—long enough. We had known each other, but——"

His voice had been failing. For a moment his head drooped pitifully; then he pointed to his dry mouth, and the nurse brought him a glass, from which he took with difficulty a few sips. There followed an interval of exhaustion. He stared at the circle of lamp-light on the ceiling and seemed to close his train of thought.

"No chance?" he whispered at length. "Not now he's dead, and she's coming back?"

The nurse had no answer.

"Tell her what I have said." He turned his eyes towards her again. "To be honest—to have something to live by—that's everything. In another woman it would have been obstinate folly and cruelty; in her

it was right. But *I* was right too. I wanted her, more than I ever wanted anything since I was born,—the one woman in the world that I wanted. I should have been a poor creature if I hadn't fought for my desire. How I fought for it! A year, before she would speak to me or answer my letters. I made her at last—I made her own it. Only in writing; never face to face. I believe I *could* have—who knows? I believe I could. But I was ashamed. I felt myself a brute. I had done all I dared."

"She left England on that account?"

"Yes. Or partly. I might have followed. Perhaps I was a fool. Who knows?"

He moaned and moved his arms wildly.

"Hold to the better thought," said his companion. "Remember what I am to tell her."

"You think she was right?" he asked, with sudden burst of scorn.

"Because you do—you who know her and love her."

"Yes." He was quiet again. "And if I could only ask her pardon! I can't write, not one line, if it would give me years with *her*. And I have written her a thousand letters. Think! The very last time I saw her I railed and raged at her like a madman. I called her a hypocrite—good God! I did; I talked like a ruffian—mad as I was with need of her. I felt as men must feel when they have killed women they loved—just like that, a hypocrite! and she with the noblest, frankest face I ever looked on. I didn't mean that; but all the rest I meant. It seemed such accursed folly. A woman, still young and childless, her husband living with someone else, and me with money enough, with pluck enough for anything! And she loved me. I tell you, she loved me, and loves me now, and will to her last breath."

He spoke in a hoarse panting till his voice failed. The listener rose, trembling a little with emotion; she withdrew quietly, and as he lay still regarded him from a distance.

"Who is knocking?" were his next words, irritably spoken.

"No one."

"Someone knocked, I tell you. I beg your pardon, nurse; I thought I heard it at the outer door. Isn't Moreland coming to-night? How long is it since he came? He's right to keep away. Who likes death-bed scenes? Be honest—that's everything."

Nearly an hour elapsed. The dying man often moved his hands and his head and suffered pain; his attendant gave him what help she could. When he grew easier a few muttered syllables betokened the clouding of his mind. At length there sounded distinctly a woman's name; it was several times repeated, as though he addressed someone and hoped for an answer. The nurse spoke to him, and he replied intelligibly.

"Her name, yes—I remember. I had something more to tell you. Is it night? I suppose I shall go before daybreak, as men often do. Now I have it again, the thought that I want to keep in my mind if I can. It's all over, and I see things in a new way—as *she* saw them. I want to tell her how glad I am she held her own against me. I am glad, glad! Not that I think I was wrong; it's no death-bed twaddle; I think as I always did. But she had *her* belief, and she held to it through as hard a struggle as ever woman endured. I'm glad! Remember to tell her that. If I had won she must have lived against her conscience. She told me, once and for all, she believed in social laws and duty and all the rest of it—believed with all her soul. God bless her, my noble darling! We might have gone to the other side of the earth, where no one would have known anything; but she recognized a law and obeyed it. I don't think it was a better law than mine, but she believed in it, and in mine she couldn't. I should have led her to unhappiness, say and do what I might. And now it's all over; now that the day's done and the night is coming, I glory in her honesty and her strength. I called her hypocrite; now I would throw myself at her feet, and beg her forgiveness, and worship her strong, pure mind. You don't know her. Don't think of the woman who is afraid of what people will say. Not she, the woman I love! All that was nothing; if she had thought it right, she would have come to me in the face of the world. And how glad I am that she held her own against me!"

"She shall know; I promise to find her and tell her."

"You will; I trust you; you have the same look in your eyes when you speak earnestly. You're not her sister, are you? No, no; I remember. It's good to end with that thought. She can never be sorry when she knows how it helped me at the last. If I had had my way, I couldn't have gone into the darkness with a mind so easy. I should have left her with her self-reproach, her broken conscience. Let women act as they believe, and be strong. No pretending, out of fear of the world, if they don't hold the world's faith. Brave rebellion, or brave loyalty in the old ways. It was my fate to love the woman—the one woman—who loved me but could resist me. I see the good in it now. It's helping me at nightfall. I have her image before me; beautiful—good God, how beautiful!—and strong and honest. She was doing the best for me, and I daresay she knew it. The other woman—gone and forgotten! But she is with me to the end—helping—forgiving—"

Another long silence. When the nurse bent over him again to cool his forehead he moved a hand towards her. She took it and held it in her own, and saw the smile that thanked her when his lips could not move in speech.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Mining Engineers' Report Book. By Edwin R. Field.

Sceldom indeed is it that so much real value and usefulness is packed away in such a small space, for it is easily pocketable, being small and flat. Compiled primarily for the author's own use,—and hence practical, above all things,—it contains a list of one hundred and twenty-six salient questions, the answers to which give a comprehensive survey of the mining property under consideration. But the proof of the book is in the quotation: (1) State shortly the geographical position of the mine. (2) What is the nearest port; what roads, railways, etc., are there near to it? (24) Is this [the supply of labor] ample or otherwise, and obtained locally or imported? (27) Are there any miners' unions, etc., and if so, how do they affect the working of the mine? (33) What facilities exist for repairs to machinery, etc.? (57) What is the nature of the vein stuff, and what minerals does it contain? Is the gold fine or coarse? (121) What working capital is recommended? Is this ample, and does it allow for future requirements and contingencies? (123) What is the price asked, and the terms of payment? (124) Say distinctly whether you recommend the property on these terms or not. And so on, dealing with all phases of the subject, from the engineering and commercial stand-points. Nor does the book commend itself to engineers alone, for it will be found a very useful compilation for directors and share-holders in mining companies, who have at times but the haziest idea of all the questions that go to make up a successful mining venture. There are also numerous valuable tables of the thousand and one figures, quantities, constants, etc., that even the best engineer will at times forget. Published by the J. B. Lippincott Company.

The Pursuit of Camilla. By Clementina Black.

First there was Camilla, Camilla Veneroni, who was pursued by various people with divers motives: Severyn Ladzinski, for instance, pursued her because he loved her, which was highly commendable. And Ladzinski was aided in his pursuit by Laurence Allison, and by Allison's sister Guendolen, as well as others of his friends and Camilla's. Then also the Marchese Veneroni (her cousin) pursued her, aided by his friends,—to say nothing of his tools, among them an assassin. His purpose also was to marry Camilla; but for her money, because his own was all spent;—the idea can hardly be said to have been original with the Marchese. Baldly and briefly, Camilla had some money and the Marchese had none, so he enticed her abroad upon pretended revolutionary schemes,—a plea to which she was particularly susceptible, being the daughter of a political refugee,—and tried to force her to marry him. The pursuit occurs when Ladzinski, her avowed lover, with Allison, (whose love had not been avowed,) tried to rescue her. They succeeded eventually, but not until Ladzinski had nearly lost his life by a dagger stroke. The tale sounds wildly improbable in the bald sketch; yet it is an accurate picture of what might easily happen in the Italy of to-day, when mediæval passions and instincts are but lightly touched by the spirit of the age, and mediæval designs and plots are assisted rather than hindered by nineteenth-century progress. And as the author tells the tale, it is startlingly natural and convincing. In the Lippincott *Select Novels*,—paper and cloth bindings.

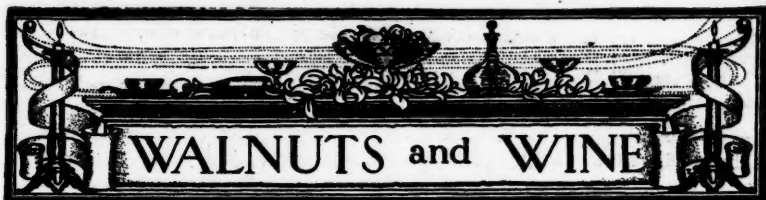
“What books shall we read?” is the question heard on every side. The public libraries have done much to answer this by throwing open unreservedly their immense stocks of books, from which readers,—youthful, as well as those

of more mature years,—may choose at will. So far, good; for the non-reading public is taught to read—something. But all too often it is merely “something,” without any discrimination whatever. And herein lies the great danger: for lacking wise oversight and direction,—one might even recommend compulsion in extreme cases,—the reader not only too often forms no judgment whatever, not only acquires no taste for good literature, but too often acquires an active taste for that which is either bad artistically or corrupting morally, or even both.

But happily there are, even to-day, some few writers who, without sacrificing either literature or wholesomeness, produce books which can be read with active interest by all readers. Such a writer is Miss Carey, of whose books it may be truthfully said that not one has even a suspicion of objectionable matter. True it is, that practically all her works are “love-stories” pure and simple, and as such probably subject to the indiscriminate condemnation of certain so-called critics, unable to distinguish between sentiment and sentimentality, between love-stories and eroticism. Yet such tales as a class comprise much of the best and most wholesome literature in our language.

Life's Trivial Round is the latest production of Miss Carey's pen. The central idea is that of . . . but to tell that would be unfair alike to author and reader. One may say, however, that beside the main episode, there is a minor love-story, and that the ending is all anyone could wish. From the Lippincott Press.





WALNUTS and WINE

On the Edge

"It's an ugly corner!" remarked the stage-driver; "but anyone can round it—with his horses in hand." The "corner" was a bend in the stage-road over the mountains and through San Marcos Pass from San Luis Obispo to the California town to which I was travelling. "Why is it ugly, then?" I asked, scenting a story. In response the driver told me about Maximo and Captain Jack, which substantially was as follows:

Captain Jack some years ago drove one of the big four-horse stages over the San Luis route. He was the best driver in that part of the country, and to Maximo, the Mexican boy whom he had befriended more than once when the other boys called him "Greaser" and stoned him, he was a hero. Maximo lived in an adobe hut up by the Mission, at the throat of the valley. His father was a wood-cutter, and Maximo drove the long-bodied, rattling wagon on which the wood, felled on the mountain side, was brought to town. Maximo's chance to prove himself came one afternoon as he was slowly toiling up the San Luis road beside the empty timber wagon.

It was a fine day for Southern California,—no more could be said in praise of it. For a mile, and in some places two miles, ahead the road wound around the shoulders of the mountain until, at last, like a thin, yellow ribbon, its dusty line vanished in the gray and dull green of the slopes. Everywhere this road followed the edge of the three-hundred-foot cañon, crowding against the wall of rock from which it had been cut.

Maximo watched an eagle wheel slowly above the blue depths of the cañon, and wished he was back in town with his loaded wagon.

Then, as his eyes followed the circling flight of the eagle, a dark speck came within the focus of his vision, and something about it made him sit up very straight and gaze at it from under his levelled palm. He knew quickly enough what it was—the San Luis stage in-bound with Captain Jack holding the reins. What startled him was the pace at which it was moving. It was two miles away, yet he could see that it rocked along the curving, steep road at a tremendous rate. It was a runaway, and a runaway on this, the most dangerous part of the mountain route, could have but one ending, unless soon stopped. A slip or a stumble by the horses, or, what was worse, the failure of the coach to cut a corner short enough—and there would be only mangled bodies and some splintered wood to mark the place of a tragedy.

Maximo, scanning the road ahead, fixed on the spot where this was almost sure to happen. It was a hundred feet in front of where he had halted. There was the sharpest curve on the road, and there the road was narrower than at any other point. A moment he sat on the lumber wagon, inactive; then he slipped down and, urging on his team, drew up the wagon two hundred feet above the sharp turn. The road was broader there and almost level for a short

distance, and the curve was a gentle one. The wagon stood close to the edge of the road, and there was ten feet of space between it and the inside rocky wall. He unharnessed the horses quickly and, with a slap on their flanks, started them running loose down the road. Then he scrambled up the rocks and waited. He was only just in time.

The rapid pounding of the hoofs of the oncoming horses came to his ears. Then the team and stage shot around the corner above him, and he knew what had happened. The brake of the stage had broken, and Captain Jack, who was alone, had vainly tried to check with the reins the four big animals, which, alarmed by the banging upon the heels of the wheel-horses, had run away, and now were beyond control. The stage reeled drunkenly, and Captain Jack, with feet braced, lurched and swayed on the front seat, his face set, the reins tight as a bow-string.

Maximo saw him throw all his weight on the inside rein in an effort to help the horses around the curb. The leading horse nearest the edge of the road made a desperate attempt to obey, and its shoes struck fire from the flints. The heavy wheelers hunched themselves stiffly, trying to hold back. But all would have gone over into the cañon if they had begun to slide twenty feet farther back. As it was, the leading horses held their footing and slipped inside of the barricade of the lumber wagon. With a crash the stage struck it, locking wheels with it, throwing it partly over the edge of the road. The wheel-horses were thrown upon their hind-quarters, the front traces snapped, and the leader wildly galloped away. Maximo sprang from the rocks and ran to the wreck of the stage.

Captain Jack was kneeling on the neck of one of the fallen horses and trying to quiet them both. Maximo sat on the neck of the other horse and waited for Captain Jack to speak.

By-and-by the Captain put out a big brown hand. "Shake!" he said.

And Maximo "shook." That was all.

F. Churchill Williams.

OPTIMISM

By Robert Gilbert Welsh

THOUGH earth be old and full of ancient ill,
 Above its cradles happy mothers croon,—
 And though the night lie heavy on the hill,
 True lovers meet beneath its changing moon.

THESE three, Gold, Fame, and Love, once ran a race. The Highway of Life was their course, and Judgment gave to Gold first, Love: A Race to Fame second, and to Love last place.

Ponderously Gold took his seat of honor and spoke thus:

"Considering the many obstacles I met, my success was dearly won, and yet in speeding my course I found sufficient time to feed well on the World's plenty and wax fat. Some fools there were who interposed between me and the

ESKAY'S FOOD



Elizabeth Getty

IS ONE OF THEM.

A PROMINENT CLERGYMAN WRITES ABOUT THIS LITTLE GIRL:

Not expected to live. Lost weight the first six weeks.

Transformed by the use of Eskay's Food into a picture of health, with firm flesh and well-formed body.

"When our little girl, Elizabeth, was about six weeks old, no one who saw her thought she would live. Her mother could not nurse her, and she weighed less than when she was two weeks old. We could not find anything that agreed with her. On our physician's recommendation we tried ESKAY'S FOOD and found it to be a perfect substitute for the mother's milk. ESKAY'S FOOD agreed with her from the very first and she has grown rapidly and naturally on it. Her flesh is firm and her body is well formed. **She is a picture of health.** She has used the FOOD about 17 months, and still cries for her bottle of ESKAY'S."—REV. FREDERICK GETTY, Phila. Conference, M. E. Church.

ESKAY'S FOOD is the Ideal Food for Infants, Invalids, and Dyspeptics. We will send a sample of ESKAY'S FOOD free upon request, and our little book, "How to Care for the Baby," with valuable information for every mother.

IT NOURISHES FROM INFANCY TO OLD AGE.

SMITH, KLINE & FRENCH CO. - - - PHILADELPHIA, PA.

goal, but I vanquished them all. With a soothing caress Ambition and Genius retired, satisfied. I touched Virtue in all her crowned majesty and she shrivelled to dust. Justice arose: my glitter blinded her and she fell out of the way. That mockery called Honesty stretched forth a detaining hand: it closed over my promises and Honesty was no more. At times Fame pressed me close for first honors, but Love was a sad laggard."

Lean and spent from exertion, Fame sullenly took his place and spoke thus:

"What have I now for all my pains and energy? A name that will be placed on my tomb to be read and gaped at by a vulgar multitude who will never understand how hotly I contested the race with Gold, and whose plaudits are given to marble and history. Why, this same rabble obstructed the whole of my course. I crushed them under foot, disregarded plea and threat, heeded nothing but the scourge that whipped me towards the goal, sacrificed everything to overtake Gold, but in vain: Gold led to the end. And now what have I to reward me?"

Then came Love, the last courser, but fresh as if he had not sped the way. And Love spoke thus:

"Judgment has given the honor to Gold, but I am so pleased with what I accomplished during the race that I shall again run the course if for no other reason than to be last. We started fair—Gold, Fame, and Love. I was soon distanced, but, being by nature cheerful, did not despair of ultimately winning first honors. By-and-by, directly in my path, I saw a broken heart. 'Twas a woman's, bought by Gold: I gave it balm and continued the race. Farther on appeared a wayward child from her mother strayed: I counselled her, and by my entreaties made her weep and softened her heart. From a byway there lurched a maudlin drunkard: I spoke kindly to him, gently urged his efforts for relief, cleared his brain, and again took my course. I stayed a brutal hand, made a happy home, cheated a divorce-lawyer, healed the afflicted, made Hope an eternal star for Humanity, strengthened the ties of husband and wife when Gold and Fame threatened them, kissed the hand that struck me, praised honest effort and discouraged deceit, gave to Poverty that which Riches cannot buy, and even counselled Wealth. So it was throughout the race. Now came those for consolation who had been betrayed by Gold: I gave it them. Anon came others wounded by the spurning heels of Fame: I bound their wounds, kissed them, and gave to each mercy for his fellow-man. This is how I lost the race."

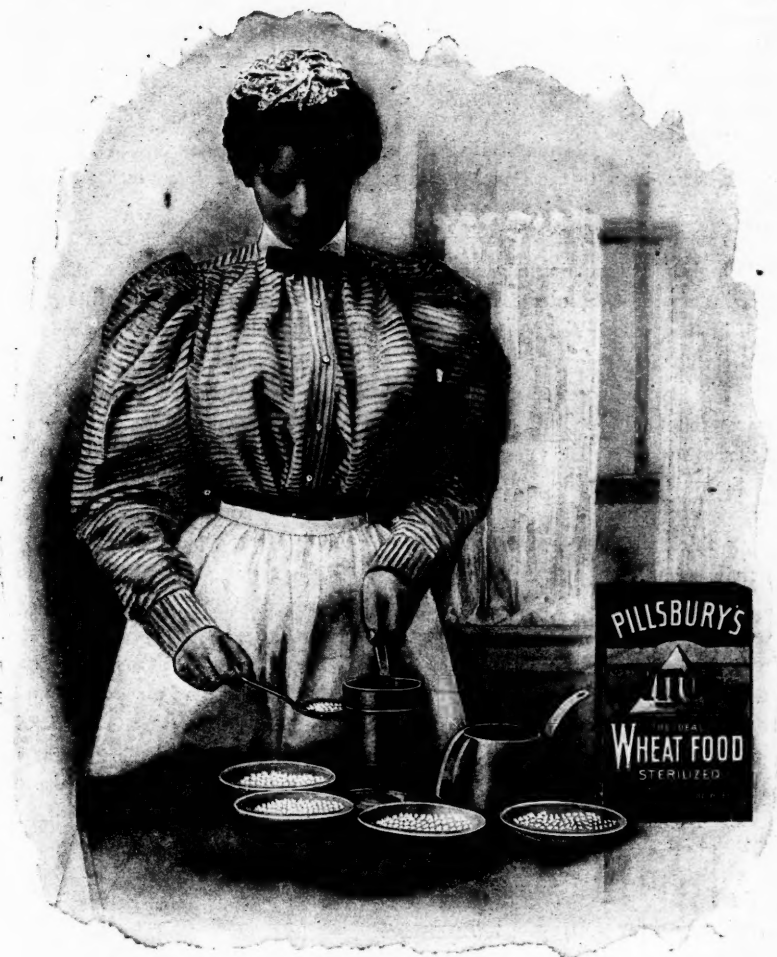
Whereupon Gold laughed derisively, and Fame, scowling, pointed to the World and said contemptuously, "These are humans, not gods."

But Love smiled patiently, and is smiling still.

A. Goeringer.

Fished Out

WITH the closing of the vacation season and the reassembling of the fishermen in the cities, the new catch of fish stories is being exhibited at the clubs. One of the best of these stories is told by Dr. Samuel Dixon, President of the Academy of Natural Sciences, at Philadelphia. Dr. Dixon is one of the select summer colony, mostly Philadelphians, which has turned Dark Harbor, on the Maine coast, into a charm-



Healthy Food.

The cereal made of hard Spring wheat, noted for its health-giving, strength sustaining qualities, rich in gluten and phosphates, is

Pillsbury's Vitos

The ideal wheat food. All grocers sell Pillsbury's Vitos. Ask yours for book of Pillsbury's Recipes.—Free. Pillsbury-Washburn Flour Mills Co., Ltd., Minneapolis, Minn.

Makers of Pillsbury's Vitos and Pillsbury's Oats.

ing resort for the hot months. Among the many improvements made at Dark Harbor was the building of a substantial dike across the mouth of a cove, so that the falling tide might not leave the cove empty at desirable bathing hours. By this means, also, the icy waters of Maine were kept in one place long enough to be heated by the sun into a more desirable bathing temperature. One of the numerous "Captains" of the neighborhood was hired to attend to the dike, opening the gate when the tide rose and closing it when the tide fell. One day the Captain hastened to the cottages in a great state of excitement.

"Come down to the Cove," he urged Dr. Dixon. "I've a great sight to show you."

They hastened to the Cove and found the surface of the water transformed into a sheet of sparkling silver. A great school of herrings had come into the Cove when the tide entered through the opened gate. There were millions of fish in that school, and the Cove was literally alive with them. The Captain had them safely trapped by simply closing the gate.

The spectacle excited great admiration among the cottagers, and the Captain was warmly congratulated, until the President of the Academy of Natural Sciences suggested that so many fish in so little water would exhaust the oxygen in the water before the tide, now falling, would return to carry them out. The result soon proved that Dr. Dixon was quite right in his surmise. The water grew thick with dying and dead fish. Not only did the immense number of herrings die, but a number of larger fish, which had pursued the herrings into the Cove, also perished before the return of the next tide. When the water was let out at last, the considerable acreage of the Cove was covered six inches deep with dead fish. They were not content with dying; they decayed promptly. Natives were hired to come with many wagons and cart away the heaps of fish, and every farm in the neighborhood was enriched by this fertilizer; but not half of the fish could be disposed of. The odor that soon hung over Dark Harbor was a thing that could not be ignored, even in the most polite conversation, and many summer visitors found convenient business to hurry them back to town.

Caroline Lockhart.

WITH a half-glass of milk in her hand, Miss Leonard tripped on the rug by the dining-room door, and the boarders tittered. Blushing painfully, she recovered herself and passed out, closing the door too late to escape what Miss Nichols, the typist, said with a giggle:

"The old maid is going to feed that ridiculous toad of hers. What a nasty pet!"

"It's a pretty good match for her in beauty," jauntily replied the man who kept books in a coal-office.

With a crimson face, Miss Leonard slowly went up to the little room on the fourth floor back. As she opened the door, a horned toad hopped from the streak of sunshine and crept to meet her. She stooped to pick him up, and the toad flattened himself in her warm palm and contentedly blinked. When first the little reptile had come to her from the alkali plains of Arizona, a somewhat cruel joke of one of the travelling-men who lived at this shabby boarding-house,

"It's not me
ye should
be
thankin'
mum; it's
SAPOLIO
that
keeps
things
clean
and bright!"

A black and white photograph of a woman standing in a kitchen. She is wearing a dark, long-sleeved dress with a light-colored apron over it. She is holding a large bar of soap in her right hand, which is extended towards the left. The background is a simple, textured wall. The entire advertisement is framed by a decorative border with a repeating wavy pattern.

Miss Leonard had shrunk from it with aversion. But, feeling its sad straits in exile, she had come to care for it in pity. Soon it grew to know her and ceased to pump itself round in anger and fear at her approach, running instead towards her with its wobbling gait when she opened her door. It was the one thing in the world that cared for Miss Leonard, and she loved it with all her pent-up loneliness and longing.

Holding the contented toad in the hollow of her thin hand, Miss Leonard walked to her pine bureau and looked at her hot face in the dim mirror.

"You are ugly," she said slowly, "poor, and forty years old, and no woman has a right to be poor and ugly and forty years old. You are all that a woman should not be. You have a right to love only a toad, and you can win the love of only a toad. You have struggled desperately for the right merely to live, and now that too is going against you. Your money is gone, you have no work, you can find no work, and you are behind in your rent. It is a tragedy to be behind in your rent. To-day you will again walk the street looking for some employment, and again you will be snubbed, because business men have no use for unknown women who are ugly and shabby and forty years old. To-night you will go to bed with a heartache and will have to awake to-morrow with a heartache. For you to be awake is to suffer. If it were not for you, little toad, I might—I might——. Oh, well, get down into the sunshine and be happy, but come to the door to meet me to-night, for I shall sorely need greeting. I shall be so tired, and my heart will be very heavy."

The woman gently placed the toad on the strip of sunshine, whence he followed her with his shining little eyes as she put on her hat and shabby jacket. Then she stooped and touched the horned head in a fashion she had, and said,—

"Good-by, little friend. Wish me luck." The toad turned and watched with blinking eyes as she left the room.

Three mocking faces saw her stand hesitatingly on the door-steps, uncertain where to turn in her dreary search.

"Wonder if she has locked her door?" giggled the frowsy-haired saleswoman.

"Oh, we'll get in somehow," the book-keeper assured her, and the stenographer tittered. So they went up to the fourth floor back and found the door unlocked.

"Oh, there's the nasty thing!" exclaimed the saleswoman, coquettishly retreating. The stenographer affected still greater fright, and sought the shelter of the solitary chair.

"Let's tie it out the window by its leg," suggested the book-keeper.

"Won't she be crazy!" tittered the saleswoman. "I'd give a dollar to see her ugly face get red and hear her stammer."

He tied a string to the toad's leg and hung it out the window, shutting the sash on the string. Then they went out with much laughter and told all about it at their various "jobs."

It was dusk when Miss Leonard returned to pass a cold-faced landlady and fairly to pull herself upstairs by the banisters. Her head burned and throbbed, but her heart was like lead. She opened her door carefully that she might not tread on the toad, but the toad was not there. She lit the gas and hunted about the floor, but she did not find the friendly little chap till she went to the

1900

36th Annual Statement of the TRAVELERS

Insurance Company.

Hartford, Conn., January 1, 1900.

Chartered 1863.
(Stock.)

*Life
and
Accident
Insurance.*



James G. Batterson,
President.

SYLVESTER C. DUNHAM,
Vice-Prest.

JOHN E. MORRIS,
Secretary.

H. J. MESSENGER,
Actuary.

EDWARD V. PRESTON,
Supt. of Agencies.

J. B. LEWIS, M.D.,
Surgeon and Adjuster.

PAID-UP CAPITAL - - \$1,000,000

ASSETS.	
Real Estate	\$2,049,222.72
Cash on hand and in Bank	1,810,269.96
Loans on bond and mort., real estate	5,981,842.52
Interest accrued but not due	245,983.39
Loans on collateral security	1,497,175.51
Loans on this Company's Policies	1,305,307.27
Deferred Life Premiums	310,997.44
Prem. due and unreported on Life Policies	259,449.35
Government Bonds	789,016.96
County and municipal bonds	3,114,997.64
Railroad stocks and bonds	7,819,225.19
Bank stocks	1,258,674.00
Other stocks and bonds	1,288,350.00
Total Assets	\$27,760,511.56

LIABILITIES.	
Reserve, 3½ per cent., Life Department	\$20,406,734.00
Reserve for Reinsurance, Accident Department	1,500,369.22
Present value Installment Life Policies	783,193.00
Reserve for Claims against Employers	586,520.26
Losses in process of adjustment	219,833.02
Life Premiums paid in advance	33,178.11
Special Reserve for unpaid taxes, rents, etc.	110,000.00
Special Reserve, Liability Department	100,000.00
Total Liabilities	\$23,739,827.61
Excess Security to Policyholders,	4,020,683.95
Surplus	\$3,020,683.95

STATISTICS TO DATE.

LIFE DEPARTMENT.	
Life insurance in force	\$100,334,554.00
New Life Insurance written in 1899	17,165,686.00
<i>Insurance on installment plan at commuted value.</i>	
Returned to Policyholders in 1899	1,522,417.06
Returned to Policyholders since 1864,	16,039,380.95
ACCIDENT DEPARTMENT.	
Number Accident Claims paid in 1899,	15,386
Whole number Accident Claims paid,	339,636
Returned to Policyholders in 1899,	\$1,227,977.34
Returned to Policyholders since 1864,	23,695,539.94
TOTALS.	
Returned to Policyholders in 1899,	\$2,750,394.40
Returned to Policyholders since 1864,	39,734,920.89

PHILADELPHIA OFFICE: S. E. Cor. Fourth and Chestnut Sts.

1900

In writing to advertisers, kindly mention LIPPINCOTT'S.

window, where she caught sight of the string and discovered her pet hanging at the end of it, killed by the north wind. She gave a gasping little cry, but this one moan from her white lips was all the joke won from her. With her usual gentleness, she took up the toad and put it on the floor. She removed her hat and coat, laid them carefully away, brushed back her thin hair, and lay face down on her bed. Miss Leonard's place was vacant at the supper-table that night.

When the house had grown still some hours later and the landlady had made her rounds, turning out the gas, Miss Leonard arose, laid her jacket at the bottom of the door, and stuffed the keyhole with paper. She went slowly to the dim mirror and gazed at the face which looked back at her with a strange, whimsical smile.

"Good-by, Miss Leonard," she said. "You are going to a place where, perhaps, there's room for plain women of forty. If there is no such place, you will have a new hurt, or, at least, blessed oblivion."

She bowed gravely to herself, and stooped to touch the toad dead at her feet.

"Good-by, little toad," she said softly.

Miss Leonard turned out the gas and turned it on again and lay down on the bed, where they found her the next morning,—for once quite unembarrassed by the gaze of strangers.

Caroline Lockhart.

Greeley's Wit

ONE of the favorite resorts of Horace Greeley in the days when he was a power in New York journalism was Iona Island, a picturesque and pleasant rural paradise surrounded by the placid waters of the Hudson, in the vicinity of Peekskill, New York.

Iona Is and at that time was owned by Messrs. Grant & Hasbrouck, both of whom were personal friends of Greeley. They carried on a large vineyard, besides other agricultural operations, on the island, and it was here, doubtless, that Greeley during his frequent visits picked up many of the ideas which he afterwards used in his book, "What I Know of Farming."

Mr. Hasbrouck, who survived Greeley for a number of years, was an enthusiastic admirer of the famous editor, and was never tired of telling stories illustrative of his shrewdness and wit. He claimed that Greeley was one of the wittiest, wisest, oddest, and most original of characters, and at the same time one of the most companionable to those who had the privilege of being within the inner circle of his acquaintanceship.

The farther he got away from Printing-House Square the higher his spirits rose, and a drive along the winding banks of the Hudson or a trip across the water to Iona Island he always enjoyed with the enthusiasm of a boy. Nothing worried him when he was in the country. All his cares and troubles were left behind him, locked up in his desk in the *Tribune* office.

Mrs. Greeley was different from her noted husband in this respect. She brought her cares along with her, and she used to spend considerable time reproving Horace for his thoughtlessness and in trying to keep him within bounds. One day she kept at him until he said: "All right, mother; whatever you tell me to do the rest of the day I'll do."

A couple of hours later Mr. and Mrs. Greeley and Mr. Hasbrouck were



Pabst Malt Extract

"Baby's First Adventure" is the prettiest, most artistic picture of the day. Painted by the celebrated Herman Kaulbach. The original has been purchased by the owners of Pabst Malt Extract expressly for this reproduction.

A Real Bracer

Do you need a tonic? Do you feel tired, run down, just a bit over-worked? Don't make a mistake; don't buy something you know nothing about. Get a real bracer—something with grain strength—malt and hops; get Pabst Malt Extract, The "Best" Tonic. Hops are soothing, toning, quieting; make you sleep, give needed rest, and malt will feed you, brace you, build you up, nourish every nerve and tissue. Pabst Malt Extract is concentrated strength and vigor, palatable, easily digested. It has long been the standard Malt Extract, prescribed by leading doctors and popular in every hospital.

How to Get this Picture Free

WHEN you buy your first six bottles your druggist will make you a present of a lovely Artotype entitled, "Baby's First Adventure." This fine picture cannot be bought at art stores nor obtained by any other method than that plainly outlined here.

Picture Certificate The undersigned agrees to give the bearer of this certificate one copy, 13x17, of the Artotype in fifteen colors, reproducing Kaulbach's famous picture, "Baby's First Adventure," when each of the numbers on the end hereof has been canceled upon the purchase of a bottle of The "Best" Tonic.
Druggist's Signature

To the Public:

Most druggists sell The "Best" Tonic. If yours does not, send us \$1.50 for a half dozen bottles and one picture, or \$2.50 for one dozen bottles and two pictures. Express charges fully prepaid. Address..... Pabst Brewing Co. Milwaukee, Wis.

The Druggist can cancel each one of these spaces

1	2
3	4
5	6

by private initial, date, or mark. Each space represents one bottle of THE "BEST" TONIC sold

the bearer of the certificate for 25 cents.

getting into the row-boat for their usual daily trip to Iona Island. Mrs. Greeley stepped in first, sat down, and placed her parasol with the handle resting on the seat and the other end on the bottom of the boat, then, glancing up at Mr. Greeley, who was waiting to get into the boat, she called out,—

"Now, Horace, be sure to step on my parasol and break it getting into the boat."

"All right; just as you say," responded Horace cheerfully, and down came his foot on the parasol, completely wrecking it. Mrs. Greeley looked daggers at him all the way to the island, but a happier man than Greeley was during the rest of the trip would be hard to find; and ever and anon he could be heard chuckling softly to himself as if he had just thought of a good joke.

Mr. Greeley made matters right when they got back to the Peekskill side by buying Mrs. Greeley a new parasol and handing it to her with the bantering remark:

"There, mother, is a brand-new sun-shade for you, much finer than the old one; and now don't you ever tell me to step on it unless you expect me to do it. I always obey the orders of my superior officer."

On another occasion while in Peekskill Mr. Greeley was sitting on a hotel piazza quietly scanning the columns of that morning's *Tribune*, when a stranger came along, glanced contemptuously at the paper he was reading, and remarked:

"Fine sheet you've got there, mister! I used to read it myself, but I've subscribed for a decent newspaper now, and as fast as the *Tribune* comes along I feed it to my goat. That's all it's fit for."

Greeley glanced up over his paper with a quizzical smile.

"So you feed your goat on *Tribunes*, do you?" he asked in the mildest of accents.

"Yes, sir, I do," blustered the stranger.

"All right, my friend," said Mr. Greeley quietly; "keep right on reading some other paper and feeding your goat on *Tribunes*, and I'll guarantee in three months' time the goat will know a darn sight more about what is going on in the world than its owner does!"

At this juncture the stranger suddenly recollected that he had important business elsewhere, and Mr. Greeley and the *Tribune* were left in undisturbed possession of the hotel piazza.

Will S. Gidley.

UNCLE BILLY ALEXANDER and Uncle Harry Thomas were bitter enemies. Their families had been at crosses with each other for several generations. During the Civil War their enmity grew stronger, and neither lost an opportunity to injure the other.

Provisions during this time were exorbitant and hard to get at any price. Uncle Billy was busy one morning loading his big wagon with potatoes to take to town to sell, when Uncle Harry drove by in his buggy with a sheep-skin thrown over the seat. The demon of resentment rose strong in Uncle Billy, and he exclaimed in a loud voice:

"Seems ter me that that ole sneak-thief don't do nothing but drive 'round my barn. Reckon I'll have ter pen my sheep."

Uncle Harry heard the remark, as it was intended, and drove on, plotting

Pears'

Pretty boxes and odors are used to sell such soaps as no one would touch if he saw them undisguised. Beware of a soap that depends on something outside of it.

Pears', the finest soap in the world, is scented or not, as you wish; and the money is in the merchandise, not in the box.

All sorts of stores sell it, especially druggists;
all sorts of people are using it.

EXPERIENCE SHOULD GUIDE.—Among the most valuable of a housekeeper's possessions is her experience. When this has taught her the usefulness of any article, how unwise to permit her judgment to be overruled by an interested dealer or pedler. Many housekeepers employ the Royal Baking Powder, and have learned how very much superior are the bread, biscuit, and cakes it makes. But there are many low-grade baking powders in the market which cost but a trifle to make, and there are great efforts to induce the housekeeper to buy these because they yield so large a profit to the seller. The fact that they are made from alum and will cause sickness if used in food is carefully concealed. The consumer must not forget that Royal is a pure cream of tartar powder and that it is absolutely healthful. She is entitled to the best her money will buy, and hence should insist upon having the Royal when she asks for it.

JENKS.—What were the boys all laughing so heartily over?

Jones.—Smith got off one of his jokes.

Jenks.—Why didn't you laugh with the rest?

Jones.—The joke was on me. He said I looked like a man with "the grippe" and at that not the *Velvet Grip on Boston Garters*, which makes a man feel comfortable and well dressed.

A BICYCLE FREE.—The Mead Cycle Co., of Chicago, is offering an up-to-date 1900 model bicycle to any person who will act as their agent. The employment is easy and consists of distributing one thousand catalogues in your own town. This seems an easy way of getting a good wheel, and if you want one and can give good references, write the Mead Cycle Co., Department 156g, Chicago, Ill.

against his bitter foe. Reaching town, he went to the family grocer's and, having laid in his stock of provisions, coolly remarked:

"That ole black Abolitionist Billy Alexander is coming ter town, and you'd better rise on your stuff and sich; he's been hurn ter say, 'That ole skin-flint of a grocery-keeper, Brown, holds his stuff jist two prices high.'" After delivering this back-thrust, he took up his station to await results.

When Uncle Billy stalked into the store with his long horse-whip in his hand, his pantaloons stuck in his boot-tops, his heavy jeans overcoat unbuttoned, and his hat on the back of his head, Mr. Brown came forward with a smile:

"Good-morning, Uncle Billy; how are you to-day?"

"Mornin', Mr. Brown," he replied, letting the whip slip through his fingers and fall with a thud on the floor. "How air things to-day? Any noose f'm the war?"

"Desp'rit, desp'rit, Uncle Billy; papers is full o' battles."

"Don't want ter hear o' paper battles. I want ter know what them big jinerals is a-doin' with them secesesh."

"Thrashing 'em, thrashing 'em like blazes," replied Mr. Brown.

"Then things orter be comin' down. 'S I come 'long Mill Street I hurn that ole skillet-skulled Harry Thomas a-harangin' on the corner 'bout high prices an' sich, an' sayin' Lee was thrashin' thunder out o' Meade: now you fech up an' tell me anuther story. But jist tell me how things is—coffy, an' tea, an' sugar, an' sich."

"That's bis., Uncle Billy. Now here's some prime coffee, jist the sort a man like you wants to pour from his coffee-pot; and here's the finest loaf sugar, jist what a man o' your style and tastes likes."

"Don't know as ter style," striking his heavy boots with the stock of his whip, "but as ter tas'es, I 'low no man knows good eatin' better'n me. But lettin' cuts go as they will, jist tell me what this yere prime coffy's wuth, anyhow."

"That? that's a dollar and two bits a pound, Uncle Billy."

"A dollur an' two bit a poun'? Why, man alive, that'll never do."

"But, Uncle Billy, that's Javy coffee."

"Oh, Javy coffy, is it?" exclaimed Uncle Billy. "Well, I'll take some, an' some sugar, an' tea; jist write it down on your book—you keep a book yit, don't you? An' don't put down no sundries again' me any more, fur we never eat sundries; them's ondly fit fur fellers like you what needs a tickler ter your appetites. Got a load o' taters long o' me, Mr. Brown. Reckon as you might want some?"

"Well, yes, I might take 'em, being's it's you. Got a load down cellar, though."

"Come out'n see 'em. Yer needn't buy ef yer don't wantter. My taters allus sells."

"Don't keer if I do. What do you want for your taters, Uncle Billy?"

"Them's *prime* taters, Mr. Brown. Not a tech o' water-log or fros' in 'em, an' the *fech* a dollur an' four bit a bushul."

"What! A dollar and four bits a bushel?"

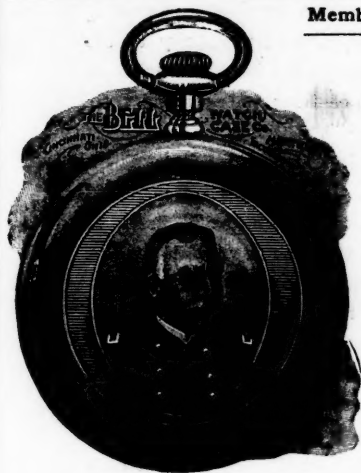
"Yes, Mr. Brown, yer see them's Javy taters."

Mr. Brown bought the load.

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Walnuts and Wine

Blaine's Wit

It happened during one of the stumping tours back in the late '70s or the early '80s. Mr. Blaine was addressing an open-air meeting in a Massachusetts town. The speakers' platform, which had been hurriedly erected for the occasion, began to groan under its load of "distinguished citizens," and presently settled gracefully to the ground, tumbling the crowd on it together in an undignified heap, but doing no more serious damage than ruffling their hair and clothing and injuring their feelings.

When the crash was over Mr. Blaine was the first man on his feet. There chanced to be one solitary plank of the platform still left in position. This was the plank at the side next to the audience, which had been nailed firmly to the upright posts at the corners and therefore had not gone down with the rest of the platform. Upon this plank Mr. Blaine promptly clambered, rose to his feet, calm and dignified as ever, and, stretching forth his hand to command silence, said:

"Ladies and gentlemen, no matter what happens, I have found that there is always *enough left of the Republican platform to stand on!* Such being fortunately the case on the present occasion, I will now go ahead and finish my speech, resuming the argument at the point I had reached when things took a drop."

And as soon as the shouts of laughter and applause had died away, the witty statesman calmly proceeded to deliver the rest of his speech, not even forgetting a word of the peroration.

Will S. Gidley.

IT PAYS TO BE HAPPY

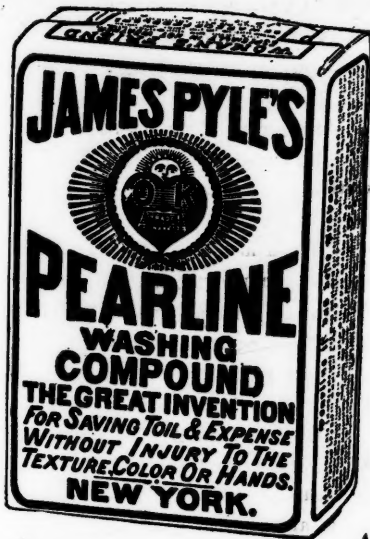
By Tom Masson

SHE is so gay, so very gay,
And not by fits and starts,
But ever, through each livelong day
She's sunshine to all hearts.

A tonic is her merry laugh!
So wondrous is her power
That listening grief would stop and chaff
With her from hour to hour.

Disease before that cheery smile
Grows dim, begins to fade.
A Christian scientist, meanwhile,
Is this delightful maid.

And who would not throw off dull care
And be like unto her,
When happiness brings, as her share,
One hundred dollars per——?



**Out of sorts
with
Soap Powders
- then your pack-
age does not look
like this
Never a complaint
of Pearline**

ASHEVILLE.—“*The Land of the Sky*”—Western North Carolina.—At an altitude of nearly 2500 feet above the sea Asheville is one of Nature's most charming sanitariums. Here, as nowhere else, are to be found, in greatest perfection, ideal climatic conditions; for neither in summer nor winter are there extremes in temperature, the seasons being marked by the calendar rather than by the weather.

The temperature maps prepared by the National Government show that there is formed by the peculiar topographical conditions existing on the Asheville Plateau the ideal thermal belt of America. As a health and pleasure resort it has no superior. The air is balmy and exhilarating, the elevation guarantees purity of atmosphere most potent in its influences upon sufferers from throat and nervous diseases. Those who visit the place once will be disposed to do so again; and the fact that some of the best hotels in the country are found there will complete the allurements to visitors seeking health or pleasure.

The months of April and May are the most charming season of the year to visit Asheville and “*The Land of the Sky*.” It is easily reached, as the Washington & Southwestern Limited, of the Southern Railway, carrying through Pullman Drawing-room Sleeping Cars to Asheville, leaving Broad Street Station, Philadelphia, daily, 6.55 P.M., arrives at Asheville the following day at 2.00 P.M. Charles L. Hopkins, District Passenger Agent, 828 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, will be pleased to furnish any further information.

In Kansas

"It's a bleak day when bleeding Kansas can't produce something a little ahead," concluded the old man as he buttoned his beard inside of his coat before going out into the wind. "Got all them things in my wagon, Henery?"

"All but the shoe-polish, Mr. Davis," said the storekeeper. "We hain't much call for shoe-polish in Waubunsee, and we sort of let ourselves run out of polish."

"Hold on a minute, old man," interrupted the drummer from St. Louis. "What's Kansas done since Funston happened?"

"Wal, my boy Webster has kinder dabbled in science, you know, ever since he got that janitorship up at State University, and he writes me that up there they've discovered another thorn in the crown that's pressed on our brows, as Bryan tells the Pops hereabouts. This time they've discovered that our great State has got to grapple with a potato-bug that's become poison proof. It warn't so long ago that every farmer could go out in the morning with a bucket of Paris green and a light heart and a sprinkler and protect his patch. Every time a bug got a dose of Paris green, his little hands grew cold, his feet curled around his stomach, his tongue turned black, and he was a dead bug. But gradually, says Webster, the constitutions of successive generations of green-fed bugs have become hardened to the poison, till at last the bugs are born with a craving for Paris green and cry till they get it. Nowadays a bug wakes up dull and listless, with jumping nerves and a gone feeling in the pit of its striped stomach, and hardly life enough to crawl to where the farmer has been sprinkling the morning poison. But one sip makes a new bug of him, and he gallops merrily around the vines, eating where he listeth. Webster, however, tells me that by next season it will be fatal to the bugs to stop using Paris green, now that they have come to lean so on it. It's like a man with the morphine habit,—stop the drug and he is a goner in horrible agony. Some morning I am going to lie in bed till nine o'clock and let every bug in the patch have a fatal paroxysm."

Caroline Lookhart.

A CERTAIN clique of prominent men in an Eastern city were accustomed to gather in the room of a fashionable hotel each Saturday afternoon for a little game of poker,—a little game that was usually prolonged into the small hours of the night. It happened that the wife and the mother-in-law of one of the gentlemen were particularly averse to any game of cards, poker being their especial abomination. For this reason the husband, who was also the son-in-law, visited a sick friend or had a directors' meeting on those occasions.

One Saturday afternoon, as he shuffled a new pack, he announced positively that he must leave promptly at seven o'clock, win or lose, his carriage having been ordered to call for him at this time that he might keep a theatre engagement with his wife and his wife's mother. The game was played in the room of one of the gentlemen who lived in the hotel,—a large inner room, opening

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JUDGING them by rules, anatomic or economic, *Boston Garters* always win the approval of men who once wear them. They are comfortable, thoroughly well made, and every pair warranted.

upon an air-shaft. At six o'clock, just as the man with the mother-in-law drew three aces, drops began to patter down the shaft upon the window. Faster and faster the drops fell, till a perfect torrent poured down the panes.

"My, my, what a heavy shower!" said one of the party, looking up from a poor hand. "It must be raining terribly to pour down the shaft so."

"It's a good thing," laughed the other, betting a stack of blues. "Now my folks wouldn't think of going to the theatre such a night as this, and I can stay to play out the luck that has come my way at last. I'll send a telegram and raise you fifty more."

So he rang up a bell-boy and sent the following message to his wife:

"Will not be home till late on account of the rain. Am awfully sorry to miss the theatre."

When, late at night, the little game broke up, with a laugh and a grumble, the party sauntered out, via the buffet, to find the moon shining clear and serene. There was not a cloud in the sky, much to their amazement. Moreover, the streets and pavement were as dry as dust. So the scientific man among them fell to explaining the peculiarity of certain violent storms which localizes the rainfall in limited areas.

But when the sender of the telegram reached his home, he was drenched by the tears of his wife and withered by the dryness of his mother-in-law. They both insisted that it had not rained a drop that day. His wife sobbed that he had tried to deceive her, and her mother openly said he must have been far gone to send such a message. That night he was the most puzzled and pecked man in all the great city.

The next day he went to the hotel to reproach the clerk with being a malicious rain-maker and to seek an explanation. Then the clerk made known to him how that there was an artesian well connected with the hotel, the water of which was stored in a tank on the roof. Furthermore, the clerk explained that on the night in question the engineer who ran the steam-pump had not confined his potations to the sparkling water of his own well, and had permitted the tank to overflow, the surplus water pouring down the air-shaft on which the poker-room opened.

So the man with the mother-in-law went out and bought rich peace offerings, charging the cost to "damage by water."

Caroline Lockhart.

THE APPLES OF SUCCESS

By Edmund Vance Cook

THE gnarled and knotted Tree of Life bears apples of success.
Some claim the lowest branches of the richest fruitfulness,
Some idly wait for wind-falls, lolling on the grassy ground,
But most of us must *climb* to reach the mellow fruit and sound.

